

ROYAL FAVOURITES



VOL. I

ROYAL FAVOURITES

BY

SUTHERLAND MENZIES

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I



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CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
THE FAVOURITES OF EDWARD OF CAERNARVON AND ISABEL OF FRANCE	1

CHAPTER II.

MARIA DE PADILLA, FAVOURITE OF DON PEDRO THE CRUEL .	71
--	----

CHAPTER III.

AGNES SOREL AND CHARLES THE VICTORIOUS	167
--	-----

CHAPTER IV.

DIANA OF POITIERS	210
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER V.

HENRY OF VALOIS AND THE MINIONS	241
---	-----

CHAPTER VI.

THE FAVOURITES OF ELIZABETH TUDOR	268
---	-----

CHAPTER VII

	PAGE
MARY STUART AND CHASTELÂU	293

CHAPTER VIII

HENRY THE GREAT AND THE FAIR GABRIELLE	328
--	-----

CHAPTER IX

THE ITALIAN FAVOURITES OF MARIE DE' MEDICI . . .	353
--	-----

CHAPTER X

THE FAVOURITES OF JAMES I. AND ANNE OF DENMARK	391
--	-----

CHAPTER XI

THE FAVOURITES OF LOUIS THE JUST (XIII OF FRANCE)	433
---	-----

ERRATA

Vol. I, page 277, third line, *for* "Nicholas," *read* "Nicolas"

Vol. II., page 33, third line from bottom, *for* "Delection," *read* "Detection"

Vol. II., page 336 fourth line from bottom, *for* "the future marshal of that name," *read* "the future Marshal Hocquincourt."

GENERAL INDEX.

ANNOT, Archbishop of Canterbury, his friendship to George Villiers, ii. 16, 17.

Albuquerque, prime minister of Pedro the Cruel, his sway over Castile, i. 76; outwitted by the boy-princes, 87; his fall, 91; his death, 118.

Aldonza Dona captivates Don Pedro, i. 140; rivals Maria de Padilla, 143; retires to a convent, 144.

AMBOISE, Bussy d', minion of the Duke d'Anjou, i. 253; escapes a plot to assassinate him, 254; his quarrelsome character, 257; brawls and duels, 258; murders many persons in the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 261; rencontre with the brave Crillon, 261; his quarrel with De Grammont, 262; slain by Count de Montsoreau, 265.

Amboise, castle of, i. 229.

Amville, Marshal d', aspires to the hand of Mary Stuart, i. 298.

Ancre, Marquis d', *see* Concini.

Anet, castle of, i. 227; lavishly embellished by Diana of Poitiers, 238.

Angoulême, Duchess d', i. 215.

Angoulême, Duke of, younger son of Francis I., i. 229.

Anjou, Rene of, titular King of Sicily, i. 172, 179.

Anjou, Marie of, queen of Charles VII.; her lineage and parentage, i. 171; affection for her consort, 172.

Anjou, Duke d', visits England as suitor to Queen Elizabeth, i. 265; reasons for not marrying Queen Elizabeth, 276; his minions, 253, 254.

ANNE of AUSTRIA, queen of Louis XIII., from State policy a bride at

thirteen, i. 458; her appearance, as described by Madame de Motteville, 459; frivolity and volatility in youth, ii. 286; serious consequences of, ii. 287, 288; estranged from the king for the first three years by the queen-mother and by Richelieu, 458; resents the iron rule of Marie de' Medici, 460; receives the king's favourite into her favour, 463; gives birth to a son after twenty-three years' barrenness, 468; grief at the banishment of Marie d'Hautefort, 472; her trials during 1637, 472; intrigues with Madame de Chevreuse, and carries on equivocal correspondence with her brother, the King of Spain, 473, ii. 302; suspected by Richelieu and placed in great danger, 473; her ordeal through the arrest of La Porte, 473; her gratitude to Marie d'Hautefort, 477; the birth of Louis *le Dieu-donné* restores concord and amenity to the court, 478; Buckingham becomes enamoured of her, ii. 188; dangerous example of her favourite, the Duchess de Chevreuse, 190; Platonic attachments, and *l'honnête galanterie*, 191, 289, 337; selects Buckingham as her partner in the "dance of demons," 192; introduced to her apartments in the disguise of the *White Lady*, 193; compromised at Amiens by Buckingham's insensate conduct, 198; feigns illness to avoid a parting interview with Buckingham, 201; formal adieu and *gage d'amour*, 203; returns to her consort at Fontainebleau, 206; jealousy

BLOUNT, Charles (afterwards Earl of Devonshire), favourite of Queen Elizabeth; rival of Raleigh and Essex as competitors for the queen's favour, i. 286; presented by Elizabeth with a chess-queen of gold for his skill in tilting, 287; wounds Essex in a duel, 287; his remarkable fate, 292; dies of a broken heart, 292.

Bouillon, Duke de, ii. 326-330.

Bourges, *the little king of*, i. 174-180.

Bracciano, Don V. Orsini, Duke di, cousin and equerry of Marie de' Medici, i. 360; causes disputes between Henry IV. and Marie, 372; visits Queen Elizabeth, 368.

Brantome, the Sieur de, his anecdote of the minions' duel, i. 261.

Brézé, Madame de, *see* Diana of Poitiers.

Brézé, Louis de, Count de Maulevrier, husband of Diana of Poitiers, i. 226.

Brienne, Lomenie de, in love with Mademoiselle de la Vallière, ii. 381.

Bruce, Robert, drives the English out of Scotland, i. 18; his decisive victory of Bannockburn, 42.

BUCKINGHAM, George Villiers, Duke of, prime favourite of James I. and Charles I. of England; his mean extraction refuted, ii. 2; parentage and lineage, 3; his defective education, 5; goes to Paris, at eighteen, 7; accomplishments, personal appearance, and manners, 8, 9; falls in love with Sir R. Aston's daughter, 9; love yields to ambition, 10; attracts the attention of James I., 10; his poverty at this time, 11; reception at court entirely owing to his personal appearance, 11; chosen to supersede Somerset in the royal favour, 12; his friends and well-wishers at court, 12, 13; first appearance at court, and rapid rise therein, 13; obstacles encountered from the malignant jealousy of Somerset, 14, 15; made gentleman of the bedchamber, 15, 16; is knighted, 16; advice of the primate Abbot to the new favourite, 16, 17; interview between the old and new favourite, 17, 18; project of a partisan of Somerset to assassinate Villiers, 18; appointed Master-of-the-Horse during his first

year at court, 19; office of private secretary devolves upon him on Somerset's disgrace, 19; Bacon's letter to him on his promising the reversion of the chancellorship, 19; the favourite's frank disposition, affable bearing, and generous good-nature, 20; Lord Clarendon's estimate of him at this period, 21; origin of his nickname of "Steenie," 22; Bishop Goodman's sketch of him, 22; popularity with the nobility, 22; created a Knight of the Garter, and named Justice of Forests north of Trent, 23; familiar letter of Anne of Denmark, 24; his patent of nobility prepared by Bacon, 25; ceremonial of his creation, double, 26; Bacon's letter of advice to the peer of twenty-four, 27; letter from the queen commending Villiers for "lugging the sow's (the king's) ears," 29; relations between Prince Charles and his father's favourite, 29; created Earl of Buckingham, 31; Sherborne Castle and domain, Raleigh's property, offered to and nobly refused by him, 31; becomes sole dispenser of all royal favours, 33; his kinsmen and connexions swarm in the king's palace, 34, 35; lampoons written upon the favourite and his brothers, 35; accompanies James I. to Scotland, 37; implicated with Bacon in intrigues to ruin Chief Justice Coke, 39; first instance of his rapacity, 40; is raised to a marquise, 44; celebrated by Ben Jonson's "Vision of Delight," 43; princely liberality to his household, 48, 49; his magnificence becomes marked by ostentation, 49; the king seeks a wealthy wife for his favourite, 54; Bacon refuses to traffic in patent offices, 59; increased intimacy of Prince Charles and Buckingham, 62; mystery and romance of the favourite's marriage, 64; correspondence with the Earl of Rutland on his daughter's elopement, 68, 69; is married in the strictest privacy, 72; entertains James I. at Burleigh-on-the-Hill, 79; borrows 10,000*l.* of Lord President Montague, 90; the odium of trafficking in patent monopolies falls upon Buckingham and Bacon, 95; reputed amours and foibles, 97, 98;

love of adventure, 98; plans the secret journey to Madrid with Prince Charles, 101; definitively settled in spite of the king's unwillingness, 104; sets out with Prince Charles in disguise for the Continent, 105; adventures on the road, 106-110; arrival at Madrid, 111; rapturous reception of Prince Charles and Buckingham by royal family, 113; joint letter with the Prince to their "poor old dad" King James, 115; lavish gifts of jewellery to the Spanish ladies, 123; his insolent letter to the king asking him to send more jewels, 123; his manners in Spain contrasted with those of Prince Charles, 127; created a duke, 128; characteristic letter to the king thereupon, 130; his life at the court of Madrid, 131; his conjugal fidelity unjustly impugned, 136; scandalous story of his misbehaviour to the Condesa Olivarez, 137; enmity of the duke and Olivarez, 137, 138; in disfavour with Philip IV, quits the court without leavetaking, 141; popu-

150, Inessa accuses the duke of treachery to the king, 151; James resolves to dismiss the favourite from his counsels, 151; the duke's insolent letter to the king, 152; scene between the king and favourite, 153; restored to royal favour, 154; forces the king to declare war against Spain, 155; turns the tables on the king and the Earl of Bristol, 156; York House and other bounties bestowed by James, 157; familiar correspondence renewed between James and the duke, 157, 158; insecurity of the duke's position from the king's sickness, 159; sets on foot the French match, 160, 162, 165; fatal illness of King James, 168; the duke accused of poisoning the king, 169-176; confirmed in favour and office by Charles I on his accession, 177; fatal error in obtaining impeachments, 178; goes to Paris to conduct Henrietta Maria to England, 184; his magnificent retinue, 184; 186, hospitably received by French

court, 187; becomes enamoured of Anne of Austria, 187; a votary of female beauty, 188; abetted in his mad passion by the Duchess de Chevreuse, 189; disguises himself in order to approach the queen, 192; offends the French courtiers by his prodigal largesses, 194; compromises Anne of Austria through his insensate conduct, 198; returns to Amiens to seek a parting interview with the queen, 201; daring intrusion, 202; *gage d'amour* on leavetaking, 203; meets his wife at Boulogne and embarks for Dover, 205; outwits Richelieu, 210, 211; love-letters in hieroglyphics, 211; Richelieu's intention to assassinate the duke, 212; the favourite's domestic joys and sorrows, 213; his pecuniary embarrassments, 214; passes the summer at Burleigh, the plague being in London, 215; his conduct as minister and lord high admiral, 216, 217; energetic efforts to create a navy, 217-219; unjust depreciation of his character as lord high admiral, 218, 219; abuse of power by rashly urging on a war with Spain, 221; blame of the failure of the Cadiz expedition rests upon him, 222; taunted by Eliot for staying at home from the war, 225; the Commons impeach the favourite, 227; his speech to the Lords on the arbitrary conduct of the Commons, 230; motives for going to war with France, 233; brings about the expulsion of the queen's attendants, 237; jealousy of the queen's influence with Charles, 237; harsh treatment of Henrietta Maria, 237; rage at being overreached by Richelieu, 238; resolves to succour the Protestants at La Rochelle, 240; splendid preparations for the expedition, 243; veiled portrait of Anne of Austria in state cabin of his yacht, 244; sails without taking leave of his duchess, 244; is visited by Charles I at Portsmouth, 246; sails for La Rochelle, 247; his energy and chivalrous mode of carrying on the war, 247-249; obliged to retreat for want of reinforcements, 252; strikes a last blow before embarking, 253; faithful as among the land forces, 255; his *L'ero sm*—the last man to leave

the beach, 255; the king's sentiments towards his unsuccessful favourite, 256; transports of the king and the duke at the vote of the five subsidies, 260; becomes the object of universal hatred, 262; anticipations of his fall, 264; prophecies of "the duke's devil" and Lady Davies, 264, 265; prepares for a second expedition to succour La Rochelle, 265; is threatened with assassination, 266; resolves to succeed in the enterprise or perish, 266; his impressive farewell to Charles, 269; last conversation with Laud, 267; incidents during journey to Portsmouth, 267; assassinated by Felton, 269; the government paralysed by loss of its minister, admiral, and general, 274; his "poor and confused" funeral, 275; summary of his character and career, 276-281.

Buckingham, Countess of, mother of George Villiers—her humble antecedents, ii. 4; marries Sir G. Villiers, of Brokesby, 4; contracts marriage for the second and third time, 7; idolizes her son George, 9; figures conspicuously at court, 28; created countess, 33; her true character develops itself, 33; introduces "country-dances," 34; receives a bribe of 1500*l.* for Raleigh's release, 52; abducts Lady Katherine Manners, 67; Sir E. Zouch's letter on the abduction, 71; partiality for Bishop Williams, 78; her match-making and rapacity, 90, 91; her retirement from court—the affair of the diamond necklace, 92-94; converted to the Romish faith, 93; accused of poisoning James I., 170, 172, 173; farewell letter to her son before sailing for La Rochelle, 246.

Bussy-Rabutin, Count, his party, ii. 376.

CALVIN, result of his preaching, i. 211.

Campbell, Lord, exonerates Reynaud, i. 4.

Capello, Bianca, favourite of Francis I., Grand Duke of Tuscany, i. 355.

CARR, Robert, Earl of Somerset, favourite of James I. of England; his ancestry—his father head of the noble house of Lothian, i. 400; page to James in boyhood, 400; the ac-

cident of breaking his leg the making of his fortunes, 401; King James teaches him Latin and lectures him in politics, 401; is recognised as Royal Favourite, 402; is knighted, and soon after created Baron Brancepeth, then Viscount Rochester, and made a Knight of the Garter, 402; transacts business as prime minister and chief secretary, 402; his marriage with Lady Frances Howard, the divorced wife of Earl of Essex, 405; makes Overbury his confidant and guide in his career of favouritism, 413, 418-421; obstacles thrown in the way of his marriage by Overbury, 414; entire power of the kingdom in the hands of Somerset and his party, 422; finds a rival in James's favour in George Villiers, 422; the rival favourites divide the court into two parties, 424; Somerset arrested in the king's presence for the murder of Overbury, 425; charged with the murder of Prince Henry by Coke, 426; committed to the Tower with his countess, 426; trial of the Earl and Countess of Somerset, 427; found guilty, but their sentence ultimately remitted, 429, 431; pass the rest of their lives in poverty, obscurity, and mutual loathing, 431.

Carr, Anne, daughter of the favourite—married to Lord William Russell, afterwards Earl and Duke of Bedford—mother of Lord William Russell, beheaded 1637, i. 431.

Carrousel, military game of the, i. 243.

CATHERINE II., Empress of Russia; characteristics of her favouritism, ii. 434, 435; her antecedents as grand-duchess, 437; abandons Poniatowski, 447; aims at popularity, 447; her beauty, sensuality, and temerity, 447; conspires with Bestucheff against her husband, 448; becomes the tool of the five Orloffs, 452; proclaimed empress of all the Russias, 455; crowned next day, 458; treats Peter with silent disdain, 459; receives homage from the nobility as absolute sovereign, 461; triumphant entry into St. Petersburg, 462; her cruel and hypocritical declaration, 465; destruction of the Holstein soldiers, 467; coronation at Moscow and reception there, 468; plots to assassinate her and her favourite, 472; secretly

- confined of a son, 475, her policy and projects on becoming empress, 475; driven to Lævonia by a conspiracy, 477, attempt of Teloglokoſſ to assassinate her, 483, projects the invasion of the Crimea, 492, 493, romantic passion for Lanskoï, 495, 497, progress to Kherson, 498, her meeting with Poniatowski, 500, with the Emperor of Austria, Joseph II., 500, design of making her grand daughter queen of Sweden, 516, invites the young king of Sweden to St. Petersburg, 520, suffers from a stroke of apoplexy through vexation at failure of the match, 523, her second seizure and death, 525, 527, summary of her reign and character, 530, 539
- Catherine, Beatrice de Courance, Princess de, beloved by Charles IV. of Lorraine, ii 368
- Cyprus, Madame de, her *Souvenirs* of Madlle de la Vallière, ii 379
- Chalais, Henry de Talleyrand, Prince de, dies on the first scaffold erected by Richelieu, ii 291, his conspiracy, 290, 291
- Chambord, Court of Francis at château of, i 230, 234
- CHARLES I. of England incurs the vindictive rancour of Richelieu, ii 325, intimacy with, and confidence in, Buckingham, 61, secret journey to Spain projected 99, 104, departure for the Continent with Buckingham, 104, adventures on the road, 106-110, arrival at Madrid, 111, 112, reception there, 114, 119, preclude him from seeing the Infanta, 120, a venture at the *Cara de Campo*, 120, 121, life at Madrid, 131, anxiety in England at his protracted stay, 131, departure of Charles from Madrid, 141, conduct of Charles in the affair, 147, the French match, 162, 168, his access to, 177, fatal error in the matter of impeachments, 179, a visit of England, 179, French match excluded 181, finally enters upon a war with Spain, 221, declares war against France, 233, dismisses the queen's French suite, 234, visits Buckingham at Fonthill, 243, his intimacies towards his unsuccessful favourite, 246, 247, parting with Buckingham 266, receives tidings of his murder, 273, orders his body to be embalmed, 274, refined taste of the king, 278, welcomes the Duchess de Chevreuse, 314
- CHARLES le Bel, his policy against his brother in law, Edward II., i 45
- CHARLES V. opposes the marriage of Catherine de' Medici to the Duke d'Orleans, i 222
- CHARLES VII. of France, disastrous
- upon her the manner of *Beauté sur-Marne*, 188, love of Agnes impels him to drive the English out of France 190, 198, 200
- CHARLES IX. of France, endeavours to suppress duelling, i 238
- Chartier, Alain, poet attracts the attention of Margaret of Scotland, i 191
- CHASTELAR, favourite of Mary Stuart Queen of Scots, a nephew of Bayard—attached from childhood to the house of Montmorency, i 297, his character as a poet, soldier, and duellist, 297, his wit and gallantry captivate Ponsant, the poet, 297, pays assiduous court to Mary Stuart during her widowhood in France, 298, accompanies the queen to Scotland, 298, constant of Marshal d'Amville who aspired to the hand of Mary, 299, frizzled verses addressed to Queen Mary, 300, arrives secretly in Edinburgh 301, interview with the queen at Holyrood, 303, received into the royal suite as court poet, 304, his insatiation that Mary loves him, 309, conceals himself in the queen's chamber, 312, banished the court by Mary's command, 316, his second offence at Burnt Island, 316, sentenced to death—behaviour during his last moments 316, 327
- CHATEAUBRIAND, Countess de, favourite of Francis I., i 211, 212, 213, 217, 220
- Chateaufort, Marie de, the original "Blackbird," i 218
- Châteauneuf, Charles de l'Andelot, Marquis de, Countess de, ii 298, involved, as lover of the Duchess de Chevreuse, in a plot against Richelieu, 296, involved in a plot against Mazarin, and banished to Turin

363 ; restored to office when Mazarin goes into exile, 363 ; his death, 363. Chaulnes, Duke and Marshal de, brother of the favourite De Luynes, i. 447, ii. 196.

CHEVREUSE, Marie de Rohan, Duchess of, favourite of Anne of Austria, her character contrasted with that of Madame d'Hautefort, ii. 283 ; ancient and illustrious lineage, 284 ; married at sixteen to De Luynes, 285 ; second marriage to Claude de Lorraine, Duke de Chevreuse, 285 ; appointed *surintendante* of the queen's household, 285, 286 ; intimate friendship with Anne of Austria, 286 ; her first scrape, 287, 288, 289 ; Earl of Holland enamoured of her, 288 ; aids Buckingham in wooing the queen, 289 ; her relations with Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, 289 ; deeply in love with Lord Holland, 289 ; banished to Lorraine on account of Chalais' conspiracy, 292 ; captivates Charles IV., Duke of Lorraine, 293 ; her return to court, 295 ; entangles Châteauneuf in a plot against Richelieu, 296 ; banished to Touraine, 299 ; goes to Paris in disguise to visit the queen, 299, 305 ; extracts from her secret correspondence with Châteauneuf, 297, 298 ; clandestine correspondence with Anne of Austria, 302 ; actual part taken in Châteauneuf's conspiracy, 304 ; Richelieu tries to conciliate her, 308 ; the prayer-book signal in error, 309 ; flies to Spain from the cardinal's vengeance, 310 ; journeys on horseback in male attire, 311 ; adventures on the road to Madrid, 310-312 ; wounded in an affray with robbers, 310 ; honourably received by Philip IV., 313 ; repairs to England and is welcomed by Charles I., 314 ; her letter to Anne of Austria, reclaiming her property, 314 ; her pecuniary distress, 316 ; protracted negotiation with Richelieu for her return to France, 317-319 ; the warning given her by Charles of Lorraine, 320 ; intercedes with Charles I. for the Duke de la Valette, 325 ; renews her old duel with Richelieu, 325 ; forms a faction of emigrants, 325 ; acts in Brussels as the connecting link between Eng-

land, Spain, and Lorraine, 326 ; her important share in the conspiracy of De Soissons, 326 ; was she implicated in that of Gaston and Cinq Mars ? 327 ; the queen abandons her through dread of Richelieu, 331 ; sinks to the lowest depths of misfortune, 331 ; her triumphant return to court on the deaths of Richelieu and Louis XIII., 334 ; diminution of Anne of Austria's affection, 336 ; Mazarin's dread of the duchess, 339 ; friends and foes of Mazarin and the duchess, 340, 341 ; she attacks Richelieu's system and its adherents, 345 ; party of the *Importants*, 342 ; intercedes for Châteauneuf and the Vendome princes, 345 ; intrigues and counterplots of the duchess and Mazarin, 348 ; the cardinal and the duchess coquet with each other, 349 ; she detects his artifice and gives him great anxiety, 349, 350 ; he considers her the head and front of the *Importants*, 351 ; her fête to the queen at Renard's, 356 ; her step-mother offends the queen thereat, 356 ; serious consequences resulting therefrom, 356, 357 ; last hope of the *Importants*, 357 ; failure of Beaufort's plot to kill Mazarin, 358 ; the question to what extent Madame de Chevreuse was implicated, discussed, 358 ; banished from court, 364 ; goes for the third time into exile, 366 ; places her diamonds with the Marquis de Coetquen, 368 ; sails for Dartmouth—captured by a Parliamentary cruiser—carried to Isle of Wight, 368 ; finds a safe retreat in the Low Countries, 368 ; once more the soul of every intrigue against the French Government, 369 ; plays a principal part in the Fronde, 370 ; brought back again finally to the queen and Mazarin, 371 ; her restoration to royal favour, 371 ; retires from public life and renounces all worldly grandeur, 372 ; dies humbly and obscurely at Gagny, 372.

CHRISTIAN IV., King of Denmark, his visit to the Court of England, i. 407.

CINQ MARS, Henri de, favourite of Louis XIII., i. 479 ; plots to overthrow Richelieu, ii. 329 ; brought to the scaffold, 330.

Claude, Queen, first consort of Francis I, 1 220

Clement VII, Pope, promotes a marriage between his niece, Catherine de' Medici, and the Duke d Orleans, 1 222

Coetquen Marquis de, hospitably receives Mulsaine de Chevreuse when exiled, 11. 368

Cornwall, Gaveston favoured by

accused of poisoning Agnes Sorel, 206, tried and acquitted, but imprisoned and stripped of his wealth, 206, 207

Coke, Chief Justice, his disgrace brought about by Buckingham, 11. 40, 41 marries his daughter to Sir J Villiers, 42, reinstated by James I 43

CONCINI, Concino de', favourite of Marie de' Medici, accompanies Marie de Medici to France, 1 357, creator of Richelieu's early fortunes, 358, antecedents of the Florentine favourite, 358, betrothed to the queen's foster sister, Eleonora Galligai, 386, quarrel with the envoy Giovannini disquiets the French court, 361, Queen Marie persecutes Giovannini, 362, Concini visits England in the suite of the Duke de Bracciano, 370, letters of naturalization granted him, 372, marries Eleonora Galligai, and obtains the post of *chevalier d'honneur*, 372 his increasing influence over Marie de Medici, 373, his arrogance and ambition, 374, bears off the prize in vying for the whole nobility of France, 374 the first to announce to the queen the assassination of her consort, 374 created Marquis d Andre, 376, his personal attributes, 376, his career of rapid prosperity and pre-eminence at court, 377, mutual hatred of the favourite and the Duke d'Epemon, 378, Latrel felt by De Luynes the king's favourite, against d'Andre, 378, plots with Conde and Bueil to agitate the crown, 378 incurs the displeasure of the queen and is ordered to quit her presence, 378 his wife effects his reconciliation with Queen Marie, 379, is created a

Marshal of France, 381, insults Louis XIII by his ostentatious splendour and profusion, 382, increasing unpopularity of Marshal d Andre, 384, his murder planned by De Luynes, 385, his last interview with the queen mother, 385; his assassination, savage treatment of his remains by the populace, 387

CORNWALL, Gaveston created Earl of, 1 22

Coronel, Maria, disfigures herself by burning to escape Don Pedro's importunities, 1 142

DAMPIERRE Chateau de, favourite abode of Duchess de Chevreuse, 11. 364

DASHKOFF, Princess confidante of Catherine II, 11. 450, 453, 454, 455, 461, recalled to court, 469, her spirited reply, refusing to be the instrument of Catherine's vengeance, 474

"Day of Dupes," its result, 1 462

Denmark, Anne of, see Anne of Denmark

DELFREUX, Robert, Earl of Essex, favourite of Queen Elizabeth, opposed by Leicester as rival to Raleigh, of whom the earl was jealous, 1 286, the queen's sudden and extravagant partiality for Essex, 286, sails as a volunteer to Portugal—is recalled by the Privy Council, 286, Elizabeth, in a threatening letter, commands his return, 286, assumes superiority over the rival favourites Mount and Raleigh, 287, is wounded in a duel by his rival, Bount, 287, the queen's resentment at his clandestine marriage, 287, censured for his expedition to Cadiz, 287, makes the Island Voyage, 287, is created earl marshal, 288, appears in the character of a statesman, 288 His impetuous temper provokes Elizabeth to strike him 288, his content with Raleigh in the tilt yard, 289; the "feather triumph" an example of the contentions of Elizabeth's favourites, 289, deprived of his offices for his conduct as Viceroy of Ireland, 290, enters into the conspiracy that costs him his life, 290, the story of the ring, 290 perishes on the scaffold at thirty three, 291.

Digby (Earl of Bristol), negotiates the *Spanish Match*, ii. 99; Buckingham's jealousy of him, 101, 128; his "distracted despatch," 112; accuses Buckingham of high treason, 226; his *Chronique Scandaleuse*, 227.

Duel of the six Minions, i. 259.

Dyer, Edward, letter to Sir C. Hatton on the means of regaining Elizabeth's favour, i. 277; himself incurs the queen's displeasure, 283.

EDWARD I., the *Great Plantagenet*, i. 4; errors alleged to have been committed in the education of his son, 5; imprisons the Prince of Wales, 10; banishes Gaveston, 14; gloomy apprehensions of his son's career, 15; recalls Gaveston to court, 16; his rage on being asked to create Gaveston Count de Ponthieu, 17; sentences the favourite to perpetual exile, 18; knights the Prince of Wales and his companions, 19; journeys towards Scotland and dies, 20.

EDWARD of Caernarvon, II. of England, first Prince of Wales, his character, i. 2; made Regent of England at thirteen, 3; education entrusted to Renaud, 4; keeps his separate court when a child, 5; makes Gaveston his bosom friend, 6; his prodigality and extravagance, 10; maltreats Langton, bishop of Chester and kills his deer, 10; imprisoned by the king, 10; for further offences forbidden to enter his father's court, 11; receives the homage of the barons on his accession, 21; appoints Earl of Pembroke Guardian of Scotland, and hastily quits the North to meet Gaveston, 22; heaps honours and grants of lands on his favourite, 22, 23; goes to France to marry Princess Isabella, 26; excites the anger of the nobility at his coronation through his favourite, 28, 29; enters Scotland and advances to the Forth, 34; passes Christmas at York with Gaveston, 36; withdraws to Tyne-mouth and thence to Scarborough, menaced by the barons, 37; transports of grief at Gaveston's death, 40; the barons in arms against him, 41; loses Scotland through the battle of Bannockburn, 42; favours the

Despensers, 43; his favouritism excites civil war, 45; advances against the barons in Yorkshire, 47; after his successes against the barons, falls again into favouritism, 50; summoned to do homage for Guienne, 51; resigns Guienne and Ponthieu to his son, 52; his queen at Paris conspires against him, 53; his letters entreating her to return, 54; flees with the Despensers to Bristol Castle, 58; conceals himself in Wales, 58; imprisoned in Kenilworth Castle, 59; is deposed and murdered in Berkeley Castle, 63-65.

EDWARD of Windsor (III. of England) does homage for Guienne and Ponthieu, i. 52; affianced to Philippa of Hainault, 56; accedes on his father's deposition, 61; seizes Mortimer at Nottingham and assumes the government of the state, 69.

Edward of Woodstock (*the Black Prince*) destroys the French army in Poitou, i. 139.

Eleanor of Castile, queen of Edward I., i. 5, 9.

Eliot, Sir John, compares Buckingham to Sejanus, ii. 229.

Elonora of Portugal, sister of Charles V. and queen of Francis I., i. 216.

ELIZABETH, Empress of Russia, her choice of a successor, ii. 436; her motives for choosing Catherine Alexiowna as Grand Duchess, 437; is succeeded by Peter III., 438; her death, 444.

ELIZABETH TUDOR (Queen of England), her favourites, i. 268; Leicester an exception to her ordinary discrimination, 268, 269; receives Raleigh into her favour, 271; imprisons him in the Tower for marrying clandestinely Elizabeth Throckmorton, 272; raises Hatton to favour, 272; is publicly scandalised on that account, 274; Burleigh's objections to her marrying Leicester, 276; Hatton's reply to her letters during his absence when under her displeasure, 280; her affection revives for Hatton, 281; favouritism described by Gilbert Talbot in a letter to Earl of Shrewsbury, 282; curious letter of Hatton to Elizabeth, signed "Your Bondman, everlastingly tied," 285; is captivated by Essex, 286; writes a threatening letter commanding his

- return from Portugal, 286; revokes her threats on his return, and bestows new grace and favour upon him, 286, takes Charles Blount into favour 286, orders Raleigh off to Ireland, 287, presents Blount with a chess queen of gold, 287, her favourites contend in the billiard on her birth day, 288, 289, she consigns Essex to the block, 290, the story of the ring 290, her life a sacrifice to grief for loss of her most cherished favourite, 291.
- Fuclos, Ninon de l', her circle, ii 375
- Entragues, Countess d', the celebrated Marie Touchet, favourite of Charles IX., i 342
- ENTRAGUES, Henriette d (Marchioness de Verneuil) favourite of Henry IV of France, attracts the king by her graceful dancing, i 342, her personal appearance at twenty 352, extracts a singular promise of marriage from the king, 352, bitterly reproaches Henry IV on learning his betrothal to Marie de Medici, 3-3, her contemptuous
- Ben Jonson for that occasion, 403, goes to the University after his marriage, 405, leaves his wife at court and returns to the Continent, 406, returns to England and takes the small pox, 409, Arthur Wilson's praise of him, 410, agrees to a divorce, 412, becomes general of parliamentary army
- ETAMPES, Duchess d', favourite of Francis I, birth and personal attributes, i 216, presented to Francis I at Bayonne, 216, painted by Primaticcio and sculptured by Jean Goujon, 216, mad passion of Francis I for Mademoiselle d'Heilly, 217, outrivals the Countess de Chateaubriand and becomes royal favourite, 217, her husband said to be the original of "Bluebeard," 218 reappears at court and returns jewellery remelted given her by Francis I, 218 rondeau and epitaph upon her by Marot, 218, 219, pro
- as to hers to society, 235, i with existing between the royal favourites, 236, the sway of the Duchesses ends with the death of Francis I, 236
- Exeter, Bishop of, murdered by populace, i 57
- FABRIQUE, Pontance of Don, i 150.
- FAYETTE, Louise Angèle de la, favourite of Louis the Just (XIII of France), singled out by Richelieu to supplant the favourite Marie d'Heautefort, i 466 description of the queen's mail of honour, 466, her irremovable intimacy with the king, 467, determines to take the veil, 467, endeavours to effect a reconciliation between the king and queen 467, withdraws to the convent of "the Visitation" 468, the king visits her there, 468
- Fayette Madame de la, flight of Mlle de la Vallée, ii 292
- Felton, John assassinates Hacking him, ii 269, trial and execution, 272, 273
- Foix, François de, see Countess de Chateaubriand.
- FONFANGLES, Marie Angélique, Duchess de, favourite of Louis XIV.,
- sojourn with La Touraine's sister, 361, is visited at Verneuil by Henry IV shortly after his marriage, 364, description of the château de Verneuil, 365, the favourite introduced to the queen by the king himself 366, takes up her abode at the Louvre, 369, compact of the queen's and king's favourites, 368, birth of her son, 370, her anger at Henry not visiting her on the occasion 370, intrigues with La Galgati in order that she may dance in a court ballet, 371, asserts her son's claim to the throne, 373, her father and stepmother sentenced to death 373, the favourite banished from court, and sentenced to imprisonment for life, 373, keeps the king her slave to the last year of her life, 373, dies in retirement 374
- Esperon, Mademoiselle d' sends Madame de Chevreuse's design of marrying her to Beaufort, ii 248
- Essex, Earl of (son of Elizabeth's favourite), married at fourteen to Lady Frances Howard, i 403
- "Masque of Hymen," written by

course of life, 10, is banished from court by Edward I, 14, a pension granted him of 100 marks, 16, is recalled to court at the instance of Prince Edward, 16, sentenced to perpetual exile, and to quit the realm under pain of death, 18, again recalled to England on the accession of Edward II, 22, created Earl of Cornwall, and has a grant of the Isle of Man, with other domains 22, the ministers judges,

chamberlain and the king's secretary, 23 constituted regent of the realm during the king's absence in France, 24, Gaveston's contemptuous treatment of the great barons, 24, his absolute sway over Edward II, 24 challenges all comers throughout England to tilt with him, and overthrows Earls de Warenne, Hereford, and Arundel, 25, his rapacity and unscrupulousness, 26, becomes equally detested by the nobility and populace, 27 general indignation felt at the post of honour being held by Gaveston at the coronation, 29, the barons petition the king to banish Gaveston, 29, is made viceroy of Ireland, 31, the favourite is again recalled, 31 the extent to which his greediness and prodigality impoverished the crown, 32, 41,

the realm, 32, returns secretly to

enemy, "the Black Dog of Arden," 38, is beleaguered by the barons at Blacklow Hill, 39, inventory of the vast collection of plate and jewels of which Gaveston despoiled the crown 41, summary of his character and career, 42

Gloucester, Earl of, killed at Bannockburn 44

Gonsalves, Spanish ambassador, witty reply to Bacon, 1176

Goring, Lord, centre of Madame de

Chevreuse's intrigues with the Spanish party, 11365

Goring, master of the "fooleries" to James I, 1138

Gournay and Ogle, assassins of Edward II, 1164

Gowrie, tragedy of—cause of Ramsay's fortunes as favourite, 1394, 395

Grammont, De, challenges Bussy d'Amboise, 1161

GUAST, Marquis du, minion of Henry III, 1253, 254, his murder, 256

Guesclin, Bertrand du, Pedro the Cruel betrayed by, 1163

Guise, Duchess de, her husband cures her of levity, 1264

Guise, Duke de, assassinated at Blois, 1267

Gutierrez, Vasco, archbishop of Toledo, 1161

HADDINGTON, Viscount, *see* Sir John Ramsay

Harrington, Lucy, Countess of Bedford promotes the early fortunes of George Villiers, 1112

Harrington, Sir John, his picture of court entertainments of James I, 1407

HATTON, Sir Christopher, favourite of Queen Elizabeth, parentage, education, and first step to promotion, 1273, personal graces and accomplishments, 272, his extraordinary elevation—becomes lord chancellor, 273, rivals Leicester in the queen's favour, 274, scandals propagated affecting Elizabeth and this favourite, 274 letter of Mary Stuart accusing Elizabeth of undue intimacy with Hatton, 275, grant of Isle of Purbeck to him and his heirs 275 his insinuations ascribed to Mary Queen of Scots, 275, conduct as lord chancellor, 276, baristers refuse to plead before him, 276, Dyer a letter on the means of Hatton recovering the queen's favour 277 279, has a rival the Earl of Oxford, 277 letter to the queen, having lost her favour, 280, appeals to her given him by Elizabeth of "Lais" or "Fyddes" 283, his reply to certain letters received during absence from the queen, 284, his death, 284 his character, as recorded by Camden and Naunton, 285

Hatton, Lady, wife of Sir E. Coke, ii. 42; her manœuvres to marry Buckingham to Diana Cecil, 55; presents a sedan to James I., 57.

HAUTEFORT, Marie d', favourite of Louis *the Just* (XIII. of France) brought to Paris and appointed maid-of-honour to Marie de' Medici, i. 461, 462; her birth-place and family descent, 461; the king first shows her marked attention at Lyons, 462; her beauty, modesty, and intelligence, 463; becomes the favourite both of Louis and Anne of Austria, 463; the king's first overt act of gallantry, 463; verses on the fascination she exercised over the royal lover, 465; Louis takes a billet from her bosom with a pair of tongs, 465; Richelieu grows jealous of her influence over the king and queen, 466; his manœuvre to supplant her by means of Mademoiselle de la Fayette, 466; her sympathy for and devotion to the queen, 470; Richelieu seeks to ruin her in the king's estimation, 470; the cardinal threatens to retire unless the favourite is banished, 471; Louis bargains that the banishment shall not exceed a fortnight, 472; the bickerings of the king with his favourite, 472; Richelieu effects their separation, 472; exhibits her devotion to the queen by entering the Bastille disguised as a *soubrette*, 474-476; Anne of Austria's gratitude towards her maid-of-honour, 477; Louis' second amorous fit for Marie, 478; is made lady of the bed-chamber, 478; sends her relative to warn Mademoiselle de Chevreuse i. 474, ii. 309; Richelieu causes her to be supplanted in the king's favour by Cinq-Mars, i. 479; the king's abrupt termination of his platonic affection, 479; retires from court on her disgrace, 480; recalled from exile by the queen on the death of Louis XIII., 480; diminution of the queen's affection for Marie, 480; is married to the Duke de Schomberg, 482; attends upon Anne of Austria during her last illness, 483; summary of her life and character, 484, 485.

HAY, Sir James, favourite of James I. of England, called *the Scottish Hellogabalus* from giving costly feasts,

i. 396; created Viscount Doncaster and Earl of Carlisle, 396; his character by Lord Clarendon, 396; sumptuous ride to the Louvre when ambassador, 397; his embassy to Paris to negotiate the French match, ii. 165; his indignation at Richelieu's manœuvres and firm conduct, 180.

HENRIETTA-MARIA, Queen of Charles I., her prepossession for Prince Charles II., 162; passionate longing to see his miniature, 163; ceremonial of her espousals in Paris, 182; her departure for England, and progress through France, ii. 195-205; festivities in London on her marriage, 215; expulsion of her French attendants from England, 235, 236; her furious rage thereupon, 235; her quarrel with Buckingham, 237; entreats to be allowed to return to France, 238; welcomes the Duchess de Chevreuse in exile, 314; the queen in turn a fugitive in France, 365.

Henrietta-Maria, daughter of Charles I., and consort of Philip Duke d'Orleans, *see* d'Orleans.

Henry, Prince (son of James I.), probably a rejected suitor of Lady Essex, i. 409.

HENRY II. of France (of house of Valois), marries Catherine de' Medici, when Duke d'Orleans, i. 220; his love for Diana of Poitiers, 223; his saturnine and forbidding nature, 234; subjugated by the *Grande Sénéchale*, 234; killed in a tournament by Montgomery, 240.

HENRY III. of France (the last Valois), Duke of Anjou and King of Poland, i. 242; his personal appearance and habits, 242; his effeminacy, 244-249; adorns his bride, Louise de Lorraine, with his own hands, 247; description of his Minions, 247-249; loses all his favourites in duel, 260; has the Duke de Guise assassinated, 267; murdered by the Monk Clement, 267; his profane couplet on his dead Minions, 262; lavish expenditure upon his favourites, 266, 267.

HERBERT, Philip, Earl of Montgomery, favourite of James I., "switched" on Croydon race-course by the Scottish favourite Haddington, i. 398.

Holland House, Kensington, built by Sir W. Cope, ii 161
 Holstein, Duke of, afterwards Peter III of Russia, see Peter III
 Howard, Frances, Lady Essex, afterwards Countess of Somerset—married to Essex when thirteen, i 403, left at court whilst Essex goes to the University and the Continent, 404, 406, makes a conquest of Prince Henry 409, falls in love with Robert Carr, 409 unwillingly accompanies Essex to Chartley, 411 her marriage with Essex declared "utterly void," 413, offers a thousand pounds for Carr's freedom, 414
 favourite, 41, 414
 the Tower for Overbury's murder, 416 trial and sentence, 416-419
 bathing of Somerset and his wife for each other, 431 her lingering illness and painful death, 431
 Huntley, Earl of, murders the Earl of Moray, i 392
 "INTORTAVITY, the," fiction of, ii 342, the increasing violence, 344 the dangerous ground in August, 1643, 346
 Isabella, the French consort of Edward II., married at Boulogne i 23, neglected by the king, 31 suffers from the rapacity and malignity of Gaveston, 32, is deserted by Edward at Tynemouth, 37 recalled by Badlesmere at Leke's Castle, 47, visits her brother at Paris, 41 conspires against her husband, 42, her part with Mortimer, 50-53 frustrates her plans with him at the court of Harcourt, 46 lands in England with an army, 47 is joined by the king's brothers and several nobles, 57 summons a parliament to depose her husband 60 affects to lament the misfortunes of the king, 61 procures his death through Orleton 64 chief of power of the crown divided between her and Mortimer 64 they effect the destruction of the king's council 66 67 execution of her paramour Mortimer, 69 deposition of her husband and confinement of his at her chamber of Exeter 69
 Ivan, Prince (styled Ivan III.), imprisoned at Schlisselburg ii 462; birth, parentage and imprisonment, 477 his cruel treatment in captivity, 478, his assassination by the Empress's order, 479-481

JAMES V., of Scotland, father of Mary Stuart, i 292
 Jars, François de Rochechouart, Chevalier de, imprisoned in the Bastille by Richelieu, i 474 his stratagem to convey a letter to La Porte's dungeon, 475-477 pardoned on the scaffold, ii 199, returns from exile, 356 intrigues on Chateaufort's behalf, 368
 Jones, Ben, "Masque of Hymen," i 404 address to York House, ii 75
 Jost, E. DE—murder of Henry III—created a duke, and married to the queen's sister, i 266
 Juana D'Á, the wife of a day (Pedro the Cruel), i 106
 Jumèges, the great abbey of, i 201
 KENT, Edmund Woodstock, Earl of, his destruction effected by Queen Isabella and Mortimer, i 66 67
 Knox, John condemns Mary Stuart's similarities with Chastellard, i 310, 311
 Korsakov, favourite of Catherine II. a sergeant, raised to rank of aide-de-camp i general, ii 492
 LACT, Henry de Earl of Lincoln i 32
 Laques, Marquis de, Mar de Comte of Madame de Chereuse, ii 370-372
 Lake, Sir Thomas, secretary to Queen Elizabeth, introduces George Villiers to court, ii 12, takes the place of cup-bearer for Villiers, 12
 Lancaster, Earl Thomas of opposes Gaveston, i 19, vows vengeance against him, 31 taken in arms against Edward II., and beheaded, 49
 Largent, Walter, Bishop of Chester, i 10-11
 Lauf, Pöb, private court, ii 89, cyprian's Puck, 111, 88
 Leinster, Earl of, guardian of Edward III., 61
 Leinster, Robert D'Ufford, Earl of, favourite of Queen Elizabeth, i 168, 169, account of secret journey, 270, his death of rival's plot, 271
 Liana, Duke de, favourite of Philip

- III., of Spain, his sudden fall, ii. 61; represented by Le Sage as the patron of Gil Blas, 143.
- Light Brigade* of Catherine de' Medici, i. 251.
- Lippomano, describes dress of Frenchwomen, i. 247.
- LIVAROT, the minion, engages Schomberg in the duel of six, i. 260.
- Longueville, Duchess de (Condé), slandered by the Duchess de Montbazon, ii. 355; her loveliness and generosity of character, 356; idol of the Hotel de Rambouillet, 357.
- Lorme, Marion de, the spy of Richelieu, ii. 374.
- Louis, the Dauphin (afterwards Louis XI.); hatred of Agnes Sorel, i. 178, 190-192; boxes the favourite's ears, 192; his youthful bravery, 191; jealous of the dauphiness, 192.
- Louise de Lorraine, queen of Henry III., i. 247.
- LOUIS *the Just* (XIII. of France), passion for falconry, i. 434; attachment to his favourite De Luynes, 436; his irritable, discontented, and vindictive temper, and puerile amusements when king, 441-436; his disagreement with the queen-mother, 445-449; want of strength of purpose, 454-457; estrangement from his young consort, 458-472; hears of his favourite's death without regret, 455; his two virtuous favourites, 458; his scrupulous chastity, 462; gallantry to Marie d'Hautefort, 463-466; singles out Louise de la Fayette for his attentions, 466; renews his intimacy with Marie d'Hautefort, 478; forsakes her for the favourite Cinq-Mars, 479; jealous of his brother Gaston, 192; jealous of Buckingham, 207; signs the death-warrant of Cinq-Mars, 330; extraordinary clause in his will, 332; his death, 333.
- LOUIS *le Dieu-donné* (XIV. of France), his auspicious birth, i. 468; education, accomplishments, and early youth, ii. 385; his first favourites, 386; love for Mademoiselle de la Vallière, 379-383, 384; his unfeeling conduct towards her, 388; adopts the manners of the Grand Turk, 395; his court described by Madame de Sevigné, 403, 404; finds a refuge and consolation from the ill-humour of Madame de Montespan in the society of Madame de Maintenon, 420; the king's quarrels with his haughty favourite, 420, 421; daily jars between the rising and the waning favourite, 422; is wholly governed by Madame de Maintenon, 425; his old age, domestic and state anxieties, 428-430; death-beds of his two favourites, Mesdames la Vallière and Montespan, 429, 430; last moments, 432.
- Luther, result of his preaching, i. 211.
- LUYNES, Charles de, favourite of Louis *the Just* (XIII. of France), humble antecedents, i. 434; appears at court, and trains hawks for the dauphin, 434; appointed master of the royal aviary, 435; becomes companion, counsellor, and favourite of Louis, 435; hatred towards Marie de' Medici, Concini, and President Jeannin, 437; Concini endeavours to secure the fidelity of the favourite, 438; appointed governor of Amboise and rapid preferment, 439; labours to undermine the power of his rival Concini, 440; keeps Marie de' Medici a prisoner for fifteen days, 440; causes Concini to be murdered, and brings his wife to trial, 440; constitutes himself heir to the property of the Concini, 441; courts public favour by recalling the old ministers, 442; prevents a reconciliation between the king and queen-mother, 443; obtains absolute power over the king and all state affairs, 443; marries daughter of the Duke de Montbazon, 443; his subtle policy—separates the princes of the blood from the cause of the Protestants, 444; his illimitable ambition and rapacity, 445; banishes Richelieu to Avignon, 445; his cruel tyranny, 446; breaks Siti and Durand upon the wheel for writing a diatribe against him, 446; makes a treaty with the queen-mother on her escape from Blois, 447; government of Picardy bestowed upon De Luynes, and his two brothers created marshals of France, and married to heiresses, 448; marriage compact between the favourite's daughter and the Duke de Guise's son, 451; made Constable of France, 451; compels the queen-mother to accept

- his own conditions in a treaty, 451;
 left by the king without directions for burial, and his tent pillaged of all his effects, 455, summary of his career and character, 457, began the difficult task which Richelieu achieved, 457
- MAIDS OF HONOUR in France, institution of, 11 379
- MAINE, Duke de, son of Madlle de Montespan and Louis XIV, 11 405
- MAINTENON, Françoise d'Aubigny, Marchioness de, favourite of Louis XIV, her antecedents, 11 406, her poverty when widow Scarron, 407, pension restored through Madame de Montespan's influence 408 appointed governess of the king's children by Madame de Montespan, 409 profusely rewarded for her care of the Duke de Maine, 411, character of by the Duchess de la Vallière, 412 the king's repugnance to her, 412 personal appearance and characteristics, 418, created a marchioness, 419 assumes the task of bringing Louis XIV to repentance, 423 character and sway of the Marchioness de Maintenon—contrast between her and Madame de Montespan, 425 persuades Louis XIV to revoke the edict of Nantes, 426, 427, her influence in state affairs, actual Queen of France, 431, plays only a secondary part during the last moments of Louis XIV, 432, retires to St. Cyr, becomes ill and perishes and dies there, 442
- Maitland, of Lethington the Scottish Machavel 11 320 321
- MARGARET, of Scotland, kinsdest sleeping poet, Alun Chaucer 11 191 d. 42, as dauphiness at twenty 192
- MARGUERITE de Valois, see ANNO 4
- MARQUETTE Queen, second wife of Edward I., 14
- MARQUESS, Lady Katherine, called the Love-fableable B. voir, Duchess of Buckingham, the wealthiest heiress in England, 11 64 her elopement, 68, privately married to Buckingham, 72, is converted to Protestantism, 77, letters to her husband, 134, 188, 244; meets her husband with Henrietta Maria at Boulogne, 205, her distraction at seeing him murdered, 269
- MARIA, Doña, Infanta of Spain, 11 113 wooed by Prince Charles of England, 113 117, incident at the *Casa di Campo* 120, 121, farewell at the Escorial, 142, Charles's change of sentiments oddly tested, 148 married to the Emperor Ferdinand, 148
- MARIA Queen of Portugal, 11 136
- MARIA THERESA, Queen of Louis XIV inter remarks upon Madlle de la Vallière, 11 382, the insult at Vesnes 383
- MAROT, Clement, poet and soldier, 1 213 his epitaph on Madame de Chateaubriand, 218, rondeau on Duchess d'Etampes, 219
- MAYERNE, Sir T., physician to four kings 11 150, imparts certain chemical secrets to Jean Petitot, the emmellist 150
- MAZARIN, Jules, Cardinal, minister and favourite of Anne of Austria, succeeds Richelieu in office, unsupported at first by the court or nation 11 335, wins the queen-regent's confidence, 338, breeds the Duchess de Chevreuse, 339, manoeuvres with the malcontents, 345, opposes the ambition of the Princess de Condé to that of the Princess of Venise 346, encounters a dangerous rival in Laufert 346, his counterplots to foil Madame de Chevreuse, 348, flirts at the same time with Madame de Chevreuse and the Princess de Guyné, 349, incites Madame de Chevreuse as the head of the *Importants*, 351, terrified by the queen's accumulation 354, discovers the plot to assassinate him, 358, his critical position in September, 1643, 359 361 his relations with the queen, 361, arrests Beaufort and banishes Chateaufort 362, 363 resumes all Richelieu's designs 368 tries to seize the famous Ancrè diamonds belonging to Madame de Chevreuse, 368 (note), near being himself by his own craft, 371, his spy system, 375, state of society in Paris after the Fronde, 374 376
- MARY STUART, Queen of Scots, called in France la Reine Fausche, 11 193,

MINIONS of Louis XIV. of Henry

Parisians to them expressed in a popular refrain, 241, description of Count la Mole, *le Biladin de la Cour*, 244, they occupy the post of chamberlains to the king, 247, character of the royal minion, 248, ceremonies used at the letter, 248, 249, Du Vallequier, the minion, murders his wife, 252, Du Guist, the primo favourite, defames Marguerite de Valois and is murdered, 253-256, their trials and sanguinary duels, 257-262, Count de St. Meurin assassinated for simulating a lesion with the Duchess de Guise, 263, Bussy d'Amboise falls into a trap and is run through the body, 265, the French nobility protest against the institution of Henry III for his favourites 266, tragically written by Chapman (1613) on extent and fate of Bussy d'Amboise, 266

Mirovitch, employed to murder Prince Ivan in prison, ii 479-481, is himself put to death, 481

Mole, Boniface la, *le Biladin de la Cour*, the minion described i 244

MOMONOT, favourite of Catherine

Montpensier, sister of, the daughter of Massinger's Sir Giles Overreach, ii 94, shameless venality in "Monopolies," 96.

Montagu, Lord, son of the first Earl of Manchester, agent of Queen Henrietta Maria, ii 304-311-314-315

Montalais, Madlle. de, confidante of Madlle. de la Vallière, ii 351

Montbazon (daughter of Count de Vertus) Duchess de called "la belle des belles," youthful stepmother of Madame de Chevreuse ii 336-343; Duke of Beaufort her slave, 347, is married to Mazarin, 349, she and the Duchess de la Vallière, 349, scene at the garden of Ponsard 353, its consequences—the Impression

Beaufort into a plot to assassinate Mazarin 357

MONTESPAN, Françoise-Athenais de Rochecourrt Mortemart, Duchess de, favourite of Louis XIV., her indignation at La Vallière being the king's favourite, ii 383, she supplants the duchess, 384, 385; rage of the marquis, her husband, 396, her uninterrupted sway as favourite, 398, her wit and rillery, 399, the nature of her influence over the king, 398, 399; patronises La Fontaine, Boileau, and Racine, 399, influence in the choice of state ministers, 400, the war with the Dutch owed its origin

the king, 418, growing coolness of Louis for her, 420, rupture with the king, 423, her frank and generous character, 424, renews her intimacy with Louise de la Vallière, 429, asks pardon of the marquis, 430, her horror of death in her latter days, 430

Montespan Marquis de, his exasperation at his wife's infidelity, ii 336

Montgomery, Count de, kills Henry II., of France, in a tournament, i 240.

Montmorency, Princess Charlotte Marguerite de, her dislike of Madlle. de Chevreuse, ii 340.

Montpensier Madlle. de, mention of Louis XIII's attentions to Marie d'Hauteport, i 464

Moray, Earl of, half brother of Mary Stuart, i character, i 356, seeks to turn to account Mary's favouritism of Castellar, 311, procures the death of the favourite, 320.

Moray, the "Black" Earl of, favourite of Anne of Denmark i 352

Mortemart, Duchess de, ii 401

MORTIMER, Roger, Earl of Wigmore the favourite of Isabel the English, i 43, twice executed for high treason, 20, crafty as a serpent for the Tower, 40, chief adviser of Isabel's husband i 43, for many years the French invaded England, 43.

- with the queen summons a parliament to depose Edward II., 60; they compass the king's murder, 63, 64; divides the power of the state with Isabella, 65; is seized by the young king (Edward III.) in Nottingham Castle, 69; arraigned for murder of Edward II., found guilty and hanged at Tyburn, 69.
- Motteville, Madame de, her description of Anne of Austria, i. 459; describes Madlle. de la Vallière, ii. 377.
- NANTES, Edict of, revoked by Louis XIV. at instigation of Madame de Maintenon, ii. 426-427.
- OLIVAREZ, the Condé, minister and favourite of Philip III. and IV. of Spain, his character and talents, ii. 112; first interview with Buckingham, 113; courtesies to Prince Charles and Buckingham, 116; offended by Buckingham, 127; is given "the lie direct" by Buckingham, 138; his grave and lofty answer, 138; tries to convert Prince Charles to the Church of Rome, 139; prevents an interview between the Prince and the Duke de Lerma, 142.
- ORLEANS, Catherine de' Medici married to Duke d', second son of Francis I., i. 220.
- Orleans, Marguerite of Lorraine, Duchess d', second wife of Gaston, ii. 336.
- Orleans, Henrietta-Maria, Duchess d', her maids of honour at St. Cloud, ii. 380.
- ORLOFF, Gregory, favourite of Catherine II., plays chief part in the conspiracy to murder Peter III., ii. 448-450; his character, 469; Bestucheff's stratagem to create him Emperor, 471, 472; abuses his power, 482; his splendid embassy, 484; Catherine grows wearied of his tyranny, 484; on his return, finds a rival in Vassilitchikof, 485; is dismissed with immense wealth, 485; recovers his favour and employments, 485; his inordinate power, 494; dies insane, 494.
- Orsini, Don Virginio, *see* Duke de Bracciano.
- Overbury, Sir Thomas, the adviser and confidant of Somerset, i. 402-413; writes Carr's love letters, 413; aversion to his patron's marriage with Frances, Lady Essex, 414; refuses to go on an embassy to Russia, and is committed to the Tower for contempt, 416; poisoned in prison and buried secretly, 417.
- PADILLA, Diego de, i. 134, 144, 160.
- PADILLA, Maria de, favourite of Don Pedro the Cruel, selected by the minister Albuquerque as his tool, i. 80; descent from an illustrious family, 80; first interview with the king, 80; description of Doña Maria, 81; question of her secret marriage to Don Pedro, 81; her influence over the young king, 82; magnificent fêtes on birth of her daughter, 83; instigates the king to seize the reins of government, 83; the enchantment of Don Pedro by Maria de Padilla, a popular tradition, 89; quits his consort, Blanche of Bourbon, two days after marriage, for Maria de Padilla, 90; her moderation towards the fallen minister Albuquerque, 95; influence of the favourite's relatives, 105; endeavours to effect a reconciliation between the king and queen, 105; she is forsaken by the king for a new favourite, Doña Juana de Castro, 105; reconciliation between Don Pedro and Maria de Padilla, 110; the favourite excommunicated by the Pope, 129; takes up her abode in the Alcazar, at Seville, 136; fresh honours bestowed upon her relatives, 144; endeavours to prevent the murder of the king's natural brother, 148; improbability of her having instigated the murder of Queen Blanche, 156, 157; her sudden death, 159; question of her private marriage to Don Pedro, 160-162; her children legitimized, and her eldest son declared heir to the crown, 161.
- Palatine, the Princess, her anecdote of Louis XIV. and the Duchess de la Vallière, ii. 388.
- Panin, Count, his advice to Peter III., of Russia, ii. 444; conspires to murder the Emperor, 451-453.
- PEDRO, the Cruel, King of Castile, results of favouritism in his court, i. 72-76; his first favourite, 80; marries

Blanche of Bourbon, 88; called the *Haroun al Raschid* of Seville, 71; mock marriage with Juan de Castro, 106; civil war and captivity of Don Pedro, 124; escape of the king, 127; regains his authority, 129; the massacre at Toro, 134; his new favourites, 140-144; the king's revenge, 145; murder of Don Pedro, 164; *romancero* on his death, 165; his personal attributes, 166

his puerilities and ignorance, 445; promising beginning of his reign, 446; his unsoundness of mind, 448; meditates the imprisonment of his

power with Catherine, 449; barbarous treatment of him, 489; bitter humiliation on re-entering the capital, 460; signs his abdication, 461; the punishment of his pusillanimity, 464; is murdered by Alexis Orloff Baratinsky, and Teploff, 464, 465

Pembroke, William, Earl of, early patron of George Villiers, ii 12
Phalsbourg, Princess de, sister of Charles IV., of Lorraine, a spy of Mazarin, ii 369

Philip IV., King of Spain, his court and character ii 113

Placita Roll entry in, of 1304, i 11

Plaisir-les-Tours, languist at, i 251

POLIER, Duira of, favourite of Henry II. of France, rival of the Duchess d'Angoulême and the Countess de Chateaubriand, i 211-219;

early life, betrothal, and marriage with the Count de Maulevrier, 226;

227; pleads to Francis I. for her father's life, 228, 229; her advice to the king relative to his three sons, 231; her powerful sway after the accession of Henry II., 237;

procures the exile of the Duchess d'Angoulême, 237; is created Duchess

de Valentinois, 237; obtains a

the Louvre, 238; the great patroness of the Renaissance, 239; inspired the verses of Du Bellay, Ronsard, and De Pelletier, 239; the famous pottery, "*Falence de Henri Deux*," made for her, 240; preserves her beauty and attractions to an advanced age, 233, 238, 240

PONIATOWSKI, Stanislaus, King of Poland, favourite of Catherine II., of Russia, ii 441

POTLAKIN, Prince, favourite of Catherine II., first notice of, by the Empress, ii 455; loses an eye in an affray with Orloff, 488; retires to Smolensk, 488; is restored to favour, 488; his rule, 490; recommends a successor to the favour of Catherine, 490; remains at court when supplanted, 491; his political and military career, 501; sudden death on the road side, 506; his character by Count Ségur, 406-509; curious particulars of his life, 510; his wealth, 510; summary of his life, 509-512

Protas of, Mademoiselle, confidante of Catherine, ii 449-454, 513.

Provençal literature, i 6, 179-191

QUELLS, the minion's, duel with Fraguets, i 259

Rabelais obtains an asylum from the Duchess d'Angoulême, i 219

RALPH, Sir Walter, favourite of Queen Elizabeth, first appearance at court of Elizabeth, i 271; amour with Elizabeth Throckmorton, 271; fictions of himself and I'about divide the court, 286; Leicester opposes his career by introducing Devereux, Earl of Essex, 286; ordered by Elizabeth to "go and plant potatoes in Ireland," 287; his end at execution by James I., ii 54

RAMSAY, Sir John, becomes the favourite of James VI. of Scotland through his alliance with the Earl of Gowrie, i 391; is created Viscount of Dalmeir and receives crown lands, 391; marries a daughter of the Earl of Sussex, and

- is created Earl of Holderness, 395 ;
 "switches" Earl Montgomery on
 Croydon racecourse, 398.
- Renaud, Walter, Archbishop of Can-
 terbury, i. 4.
- René, Count of Provence, titular king
 of Sicily, i. 172.
- "Reign of the Favourites" (Henry
 III. of France), i. 242.
- Retz, Cardinal de, regretted by the
 Frondeurs, ii. 276.
- RIBARAC, the minion, engages Maugir-
 on in the duel of six, 259, 260.
- RICH, Henry, Earl of Holland, fa-
 vourite of James I. of England and
 Queen Henrietta Maria; his repug-
 nance to the condition of royal fa-
 vourite, i. 407; becomes eventually
 the favourite's favourite, ii. 161;
 made gentleman of Prince Charles's
 bedchamber, and "preferred to a
 wife," 161; despatched on a secret
 mission to France touching the
 French match, 162; his letters
 about the Princess Henrietta Maria,
 163, 164; created Earl of Holland,
 164; becomes enamoured of Ma-
 dame de Chevreuse, 164, 288; aids
 Buckingham in wooing Anne of
 Austria, 289; joins the royalist
 party in England, 325; brought to
 the scaffold by the Parliamentarians,
 372.
- RICHARD of Bordeaux (II. of Eng-
 land), fatal indulgence in favourit-
 ism, i. 2.
- RICHELIEU, Cardinal, Armand,
 Jean du Piessis, obtains royal favour
 through d'Ancre, i. 445; brought into
 power by Marie de' Medici, 389;
 drives that queen into exile, 389;
 retrieves France from her prostra-
 tion, 390, 469; incites the queen-
 mother to rebel against her son,
 450; his extraordinary task, 469,
 ii. 241; banishes the king's vir-
 tuous favourite, 472; banishes Ma-
 dame de Chevreuse, 473; imprisons
 the queen's confidential servant La
 Porte, 473; supplants Marie d'Hau-
 tefort in the king's favour by Cinq
 Mars, 479; sentences that favourite
 to the scaffold, 330; jealous of
 Anne of Austria, ii. 301; rivalry of
 Buckingham for the queen's fa-
 vour, 188; seeks to ruin the queen
 in the affair of the diamond aiguil-
 lette, 208; is outwitted by Buck-
 ingham, 211; refuses to receive
 Buckingham as ambassador, 234;
 his struggle with the Huguenots,
 241; his struggle with Bucking-
 ham at Rochelle, 252; contributes
 to the destruction of Charles I.
 167; jealous and mistrustful of
 Châteauneuf, 297; Prince de Cha-
 lais, his first victim, 291; his
 wrath on discovering Châteauneuf's
 plot, 298; endeavours to conciliate
 Madame de Chevreuse, 308; tries
 to prevent her escape into Spain,
 312; retires in ill health to Ta-
 rascon, 328; discovers the plot of
 Cinq Mars, 329; precedes by a
 few months Louis XIII. to the
 tomb, i. 480, ii. 332.
- Richelieu, Madame de (mother of the
 cardinal-minister) resigns her office
 of *dame d'atours* to Marie de' Me-
 dici, i. 362.
- Rochefoucauld, La, author of the
 "Maxims," his account of Ma-
 dame de Chevreuse's intrigues, ii.
 348-350, 351; endeavours to hush
 up the quarrel of the two duchesses,
 357; position after the Fronde,
 375, 376.
- Rochelle, La, siege of, ii. 249-255,
 261, 262.
- Rocroy, battle of, won by Condé, ii.
 360.
- Rohan, Duchess de, and daughter eat
 horseflesh at La Rochelle, ii. 250.
- Rohan, Marie de, *see* Chevreuse.
- Ronsard, the poet, page to James V.
 of Scotland, i. 299; verses on Mary
 Stuart's return to Scotland, 299;
 receives buffet of silver plate from
 Queen Mary, 300.
- SAVOY, Louise of, mother of Francis I.,
 i. 210, 215.
- Scarron, the widow, *see* Madame de
 Maintenon.
- SCHOMBERG, the minion, is killed by
 Livarot in the duel of six, i. 260.
- SCOTTISH FAVOURITES of James
 I., quarrel with the English minions,
 i. 397.
- Seigné, Madame de, describes life at
 Versailles, ii. 402-404.
- Sforza, Francis, i. 222.
- Sherborne Castle unfeelingly torn
 from Sir W. Raleigh, ii. 31.
- Sherburn, Edward, his letter to Lord
 Holland, ii. 29.
- Sicily, Isabeau of Anjou-Lorraine,
 titular queen of Sicily, i. 172.

elevated though faulty character, 1
168, 169, parentage, beauty, and
mental acquirements, 172, 173,
maid of honour to Isabeau of Anjou
Lorraine, 172, visits the court of
Charles VII at Bourges, 173,
arouses the king from his lethargy,
175, the astrologer's prediction,
175, awakens the slumbering in-
stinct of French chivalry, 176, au-

189, visits the camp before Pon-
toise, 190, the dauphin's (afterwards
Louis XI) hatred of the favourite,
190-192, the dauphin gives the
Dame de Beauté a box on the ears,
192, Agnes dies suddenly at
Jumièges, 193, lives of Joan of
Arc and Agnes Sorel contrasted,
194, their portraits in the same
panel at the *Château d'En*, 194,
their separate services to the cause
of Charles VII, 198-200, mission
of Agnes Sorel, 202, 203, her
tomb and effigy at Loches, 202

duct on her return to Scotland, 298,
296, patronage of the poets Ron-
sard and Chastellair 298, 299, ap-
points Chastellair "court poet," 304,
familiarities with Chastellair con-
demned by John Knox, 310 311, she
lashes Chastellair, 315 Chastellair's
second insult, 316, her interview
with Miray thereupon 316, 317,
318, 319, emotion on hearing Chas-
tellair's sentence, 322, refuses to
commute the sentence, 326

Solf L, La IV, her aristocratic and un-
principled character, 4407

Sully, Duke de, minister of Henry IV
presses forward the marriage with
Marie de' Medici, 1 353, accompa-

nies Henry IV. to Lyons to meet
Marie de' Medici, 358; advises the
dismissal of the Italian favourites,
362, his trick upon the Italian
ladies at a banquet with the wine
of Arbois, 367, mediates in a do-
mestic broil between the king and
queen, 373, retires from office in
favour of Concini, 377.

TALBOT, Gilbert, letter about the ri-
valry between the Earl of Oxford
and Sir C Hatton, 1 282

Talbot, Lord letter to Earl of Shrews-
bury on Hatton's sickness, 1 283

Temple, *Château du*, its society, 11.
374

Tenorio, Juan, the *Don Giovanni* of
the stage, 1 82 92 120

Thou, De, compromised by Madame
de Chevreuse 11 328, executed for
his share in the plot of Cinq Mars,
328 330

Torres, his courtesies to Buckingham
before La Rochelle, 11. 249

Turenne, and the siege de Thionville,
11 360

Turner Mrs, accomplice of Lady
Lasey in Overbury's murder, 1 410
416, her roll of devils' names, 417,
convicted and hanged at Tyburn,
426

VALLETTI, La, created Duke
d'Epemon, 1 266, precedence
granted to this minion 266, com-
pared to Gavaston, 266 11 348

Val-de Grace, the retreat of Anne of
Austria, 11 299 300, 305

VALLIERE, Louise Duchess de la,
favourite of Louis XIV, parentage
and childhood, 11 376, appointed
maid of honour to Duchess d'Or-
leans, 376, her loveliness, as de-
scribed by contemporaries, 377, by
M de Sainte-Paule, 378, by the
Abbé de Choisy 378, sees Louis
Alb for the first time at St.
Cloud, 379, created a duchess,
383, offends Maria Theresa, 383,
384, supplanted by Madame de
Montespan, 384, 385, 394, unfeel-
ing conduct of Louis XIV., 398,
flight to Cladot, 399, her "flexi-
bility," 399 350, her gentleness
and humility, 390, 391, her suffer-
ings from the superstitiousness of her
rival, 392, she takes the veil 397;
Madame de Devillé's panegyric of

- her, 397; her repentance and death-bed, 429.
- VALLIER, St., Count de, father of Diana of Poitiers, i. 227; reprieved on the scaffold through the pleading of Diana, 228.
- VALOIS, Marguerite de, Queen of Navarre, and sister of Francis I., i. 212, 213; the "Heptameron," 214; her court, 225.
- VALOIS, Marguerite de, daughter of Henry II. and wife of Henry IV., her ostentatious devotion and licentiousness, i. 246; guards placed over her to check her levity, 255; procures the assassination of Du Guast, 256; cultivated her beauty scientifically, 294.
- Vendôme, Cæsar, Duke de, son of Henry IV. by the *Fair Gabrielle*, his factious and restless life, ii. 346, 274.
- VERE, Edward de, Earl of Oxford, rivals Hatton in Queen Elizabeth's favour, ii. 277.
- Versailles changes its aspect under the sway of the Marchioness de Montespan, ii. 401; picture of, by Madame de Sevigné, 402-404, 413.
- Ville, Henry de Livron, Marquis de, his mission to the Duchess de Chevreuse, ii. 321.
- VILLEQUIER, De, the favourite, murders his wife, i. 252.
- Vinta, Tuscan minister, remonstrates with Marie de' Medici on her favouritism, i. 263.
- Viteaux, the Baron de, hired by Marguerite de Valois to murder the minion Du Guast, i. 256.
- Vivonne, Duke de, brother to Madame de Montespan, ii. 405.
- Voltaire, his bitter satire of Catherine II. under the mask of flattery, ii. 530.
- VORONTZOFF, Elizabeth, favourite of Peter III., her person and manners described, ii. 439; treated rudely by the soldiers, 463; exiled by Catherine, 463.
- WAR of the three Henries, i. 267.
- Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, the great seal given to, ii. 77; converts Lady Katherine Manners to Protestantism, 77; introduces Laud at court, 78.
- YERMOLOF, favourite of Catherine II., exposes the tyranny of Potemkin, ii. 497; called by Potemkin the *White Moor*, 497; dismissed to travel, 497; enormously enriched during his twelve months' favour, 497.
- ZAVADOFFSKY, favourite of Catherine II., succeeds Potemkin, ii. 490, 491; retires at the end of nine months, 492.
- ZOUCH, Sir E., letter on the abduction of Lady Katherine Manners, ii. 71.
- ZUBOF, last favourite of Catherine II., the treasures of the empire lavished on him when twenty-five, ii. 513; disposition and personal attributes, 514; created count and prince, 528; literally Autocrat of Russia, 528; sinks into instant obscurity on the death of Catherine, 529.



CHAPTER I.

THE FAVOURITES OF EDWARD OF CAERNARVON AND ISABELLA OF FRANCE.

I.

PIERS DE GAVESTON AND OUR FIRST PRINCE OF WALES.

THE proud line of our Plantagenet princes, reigning over these realms for more than three centuries, presents two instances of deposition and violent death through indulgence on the part of the royal victims, Edward the Second and Richard the Second, in the culpable weakness of an infatuated favouritism. Ancient and modern annals alike show that the eldest sons of great monarchs too often reverse the order of nature by being very generally their parents' opposites. Such was notably the case with Edward of Caernarvon and Richard of Bordeaux, the unworthy heirs of two most noble sires. How mournful is the reflection that our first *English* Prince of Wales should be the first King of England who sacrificed throne and life through obstinately and perversely clinging to unworthy favourites, and that a like fate should befall the degenerate son of our chivalrous Black Prince! But the weak, wayward, and undutiful son of the great Plantagenet, in sporting with, rather than wielding the sceptre of this realm, was destined to reap a full and terrible measure of retribution for his folly; and it is because no kingly adversity has been more clearly traceable to the personal errors of the sovereign, that we read in the dark and troubled record of both reigns

such signal example of a wasted life, a lost throne, and the catastrophe of a terrible death. Those lives and reigns most strikingly point the moral of two historical lessons by which future sovereigns may be warned and guided. Other examples may teach a King of England what to imitate, but the careers of Edward and Richard Plantagenet impressively point out what he must avoid in order to reign, not merely with honour, but even personal safety and ordinary comfort; and are beacons to warn him of those rocks and shoals amongst which even a royal argosy may suffer shipwreck. "Weep for the dead, for he hath lost the light, and weep for the fool, for he wanteth understanding; make little weeping for the dead, for he is at rest, but the life of the fool is worse than death." These solemn words might form not an inappropriate text to the humiliating narrative of the reign of the weakest and most incompetent monarch that ever sat on the throne of England.

Prince Edward of Caernarvon is said to have borne great resemblance to his illustrious father in stature, strength, and beauty of person, but very little in the qualities of the mind. Talkative and irresolute, facile and intractable by turns, he possessed neither the mettle nor the indomitable resolution requisite for carrying on the arduous task of conquest and repression so solemnly bequeathed him with the crown. Though not deficient in the physical courage inherited from his race, his youth had been so wholly given up to ease and pleasure, that he had neglected to acquire the manly virtues which harder life best produces, and lacked the moral energy, endurance, and indefatigable perseverance with which his glorious father waged the rough trade of war—preferring rather

"The golden canopy, the glittering plate,
The regal palace, the luxurious board,
The liv'ri'd army, and the menial lord,"

to the din of arms, and hard life, and frugal fare of the soldier. Guilty of many follies, but few vices, Edward appears to have ordinarily spent his time rather in a frivolous than in a criminal manner. But the most striking

feature in this prince's character was his unbounded and inviolable attachment to the two successive favourites—Gaveston and the younger Despenser. By such obstinate indulgence of a vicious favouritism, Edward did his utmost to shake to pieces that power which had been built up by his mighty father. That was the real cause of all the calamities of his reign, the miseries of his life, and the violence of his death. For those unworthy favourites, by their insolence, ambition and rapacity, excited universal hatred and indignation, and in the end brought ruin and death upon themselves and their too indulgent master.

Whilst the first favourite of Edward of Caernarvon has been stigmatized as the immediate tempter, Edward I., it is alleged, was the real corrupter of his son, by surrounding him with all the pomp of greatness and obsequious flattery, at that period of his life when the character most needs the wise discipline of simple habits and judicious restraint. From sheer necessity, soon after the prince was thirteen (1297), his father when about to sail for Flanders made him Regent of England, appointing counsellors to assist and direct him. But these, it is said, contented themselves merely with a perfunctory discharge of their daily business, and left the young viceroy freely exposed to all the blandishments and adulation which, in a splendid court,

“The swarm that in the noontide beam is born”

would be as eager to pay to a paternal idol so prematurely exalted, as the flattered child would be impatient to receive. After such a gratification of boyish vanity before any judgment existed to counteract its mischief, what benefit, it has been asked, could Edward expect that his son would receive from any moral or lettered tuition? Good counsel would only seem monkish severity; instruction, pedantry; rebuke, impertinence; and hesitating obedience, even to irregular caprices, presumptuous disaffection. But Edward's personal pride, it is asserted, blinded his discretion; and “that bosom sin which led him, as much as his policy, to seize the crowns of Wales and Scotland, equally urged him

to invest his son, even in childhood, with those ostentatious distinctions which defeated his own hopes and purposes, and severely avenged his persevering and unpitied ambition" *.

Now, all these are self-evident truisms. Ambition, like every other "pleasant vice" and "bosom sin," must pay the price of its indulgence. Whilst the "ruthless king" headed his armies on the distant plains of Flanders or Guienne, the tutelage of his son was necessarily delegated to those who, he trusted, would show themselves competent and vigilant in the discharge of so high and onerous a trust. Absorbed in his schemes of conquest or repression, alternately at home and abroad, what better provision could the sagacious Plantagenet have made for the care of his son and nation, than the appointment of a regency of which, during his absence, the heir apparent should be the nominal head, with such men as the learned Reynaud and the sagacious Bishop Langton for his counsellors and executive? Again, with regard to his nurture and education—although Edward of Caernarvon, at seven years old, had sustained the irreparable loss of an admirable mother, the affectionate and high-minded Eleanor of Castile—every care had been taken by his father towards providing the young prince with an education befitting his lofty destiny, and the important charge was entrusted to one of the most eminent scholars of the time, Walter Reynaud, afterwards Chancellor and Archbishop of Canterbury. For the abortive result of his teaching and tutelage, the late Lord Campbell thus exonerates the learned chancellor—"Reynaud, by his parts and address, had gained the favour of that discerning prince, Edward I., who made him tutor to his son.

He cannot be held accountable for the defective character or conduct of his royal pupil, who, though he might have been expected to have inherited great talents from both his parents, was by nature of an understanding narrow, frivolous, and incapable of cultivation or correction"†. This seems a more just judgment than that contained in the severe strictures passed by a painstaking his

* Turner

† "Lives of the Lord Chancellors" vol. I.

though there was an inequality of mental power "The stronger, at least the more imperious mind, was with Piers, and in this case, as in all other such companionships, the more crafty and resolute intellect shaped, ruled, and unhappily misled the weaker understanding' *

It is not too much to say—nor is the term itself, as applied to the young Gascon, in any sense too forcible—that the bosom friend of the Prince of Wales first led him into evil laid enmity between him and his father, and finally set the prince upon a course which ultimately tended to the destruction alike of both the wanton favourite and giddy patron.

The Gascon was remarkably handsome, witty, brave, and accomplished, but there was a mixture of elegance and sensuality about him that made the daily influence of his example a dangerous standard of morals and conduct for imitation by the heir apparent. To the irresistible charm of graceful manners, a prepossessing countenance, and a stately figure, were superadded mental gifts very rarely found in this country during that rough age of war and sport. Endowed with a vivacious and brilliant intellect, Gaveston's mind had been early imbued with all the insidious charms of the soft yet chivalrous Provençal literature and *gaie science*, at that period rendered so attractive, not only in their native "courts of love," but throughout half the halls and courts of Europe, by the *lais*, *virelais*, and *sirventes* of trouveres and troubadours. Thus adorned, however, with every advantage of person and manner capable of creating affection, he was utterly destitute of those qualities that serve to procure lasting esteem. Yet gay, giddy, debauched, rapacious, and arrogant as he was, he possessed that peculiar temperament which especially commended itself to the taste of a pleasure loving prince, who seemed to think no reward equal to his favourite's desert. A life of sensual enjoyment and dainty profusion was unhappily but too congenial to the ruling passions of the youthful Plantagenet, and with his "Perot" as the intimate and instrument of his indulgences, he gradually became prone to an exuberance of vulgar vice.

* Dr. Doran's "Book of the Prince of Wales."

This prematurely developed inclination of Edward of Caernarvon and his Provençal favourite to immoderate pleasure, luxury, and extravagance, was in the end gratified at the expense of every moral obligation. The Gascon sang with Anacreontic fervour the *chansons*, and recited with ribald verve the *sirventes* of his native Guienne, so full of provoking and contagious fire—flattering the abandoned disposition of the prince and his followers, whose flagrant immoralities were rendered more seductive by the poetic veil which, while it gracefully concealed the nakedness, invested with more winning charm the prurient forms of physical allurements. Thus fatally did the fervid Gascon proffer in the daily routine of private intercourse the disguised charms of the Circean cup, and thus were the natural deformities of vice hidden by the raiment of a splendid and impassioned fancy, and the highest ranks of grandeur in England gave conspicuous examples of vice and profligacy, as the arts of pleasure stole insidiously through every class of the youthful prince's court and followers.

Yet Piers de Gaveston was no vulgar parasite, no servile sycophant to kiss the hem of a royal robe, or be the butt of either prince or courtier. He was rather the glittering corypheus of a state pageant, the stately symposiarch of the regal feast, the *arbiter elegantiæ*, and master of the revels of Prince Edward's voluptuous court. Of unflinching nerve, unscrupulous, yet intelligent, he led rather than followed the footsteps of the hereditary prince; and so long as the giddy race was run, enacted the boon companion and bosom friend, and high-handed minister, instead of the obsequious attendant or fawning flatterer of his generous but infatuated master. Of a disposition to be easily led, Edward found in the Gascon favourite an enterprising genius eager to seize the reins, whether in the career of pleasure or governance, and that dominant will and cool high-handed daring which, steadily and unscrupulously exerted, enabled a young man of comparatively humble origin to play a most important though exceptional part in the history of this country at the commencement of the fourteenth century.

Neither was the public mischief wrought by the favourite's conduct and demeanour of light account. Aristotle, in one of his profound views of human nature, remarks that persons inclined to pleasure are disposed to placability, but qualified his expression by the exclusion of wanton insolence. It seemed to be Gaveston's natural bias, doubtless as a Gascon born, to provoke hostility by his glaring, petulant insolence. In its unrestricted indulgence the spoiled favourite was heartily joined by his thoughtless and reckless master. Quick-witted and sarcastic, the Gascon's wit was led astray by his levity and ribaldry; and intoxicated with immoderate power, he became haughty and overbearing, and treated the English nobility, from whom he doubtless frequently received marks of contempt, with scorn and derision. It was therefore inevitable that, apart from the hatred caused by his pride, rapacity, and arrogance, he should excite a deadly enmity among all ranks, which, in the end, pursued him to exile, ruin, and an ignominious death.

There is much to be urged in extenuation of the censure passed by some historians on a monarch so sagacious as Edward I. for permitting such a dangerous person as Gaveston to become the intimate and prime favourite of his heir. Yet, the idiosyncrasy of the prince apart, the Gascon's natural abilities had been well cultivated for that period; he was not only of polished mind and manners, but well skilled in all martial exercises. These, together with the exterior advantages of a fine person and graceful demeanour, presented an unusual combination of excellences, which, had they been balanced by good morals, would have admirably qualified him for the post to which the great king appointed him. Continued absence at the head of his armies, whilst pursuing that career of enterprise and conquest which so preoccupied him during the greater part of his reign, probably hindered the royal warrior from observing till too late the evil influence exercised by Gaveston over his weak and pleasure-loving son. Or, it might be that, perceiving the English nobility had become too rude and fierce through a long course of war, he hoped that the elegant accomplishments

and graceful demeanour of the Provençal might exert a civilizing influence over not only the heir-apparent, but help to soften that asperity of manners so widely prevalent amongst his island nobility, and give a more polished tone to the English court, which had unfortunately lost the gentle influence of the illustrious queen-mother, his *chère reine*, the faithful and heroic Eleanor of Castile.

It is not very surprising then that this all-accomplished young courtier should speedily insinuate himself into the good graces of the hereditary prince by the charm of his behaviour, wit, and varied talents, and by supplying him at first with all those innocent though frivolous amusements which suited his capacity as well as the bent of his disposition and inclinations. Left to themselves for long periods to enjoy their full swing of idleness and pleasure, no wonder that the personal graces and other seductive qualities of Gaveston speedily rendered him both necessary and dear to a prince who early manifested such a decided proclivity towards ease, show, and splendour; and the favourite, whose inclinations lay in the same direction, neglected nothing that could promote the vicious indulgences of his youthful master, and by ministering to them in every way, he insensibly acquired that ascendancy over Prince Edward which his judicious and strong-minded parent only perceived when too late. Such were the attributes and such the circumstances that doubtless mainly contributed to obtain for him that hold upon the mind and affections of the thoughtless and pleasure-loving Edward, which in those days of ignorance and superstition must indeed have made that feeble-minded prince appear as one spell-bound and held helplessly fascinated under the influence, as it were, of some irresistible glamour.

In 1303 the King's Exchequer at Westminster was broken open and robbed of a very large sum of money and jewels laid up therein for the expenses of the war in Scotland. But the robbery of his treasure and his contests with his clergy were trifling annoyances compared with the gloomy forebodings with which he regarded the conduct of his eldest

son That son, now nineteen years of age, had already been notoriously remarkable for his love of loose company, rude sports, and wasteful expenditure. The prodigal course also into which Gaveston led the Prince of Wales, by continually throwing the finances of the heir apparent into disorder, had repeatedly drawn down upon them both the anger of King Edward. At a moment, too, when he ought to have conducted himself with the greatest circumspection, Gaveston committed the egregious folly of instigating his giddy master to insult a high functionary of the crown—Langton, Bishop of Chester, then Chancellor of the Exchequer—on his refusing to minister further to their reckless extravagance.

The prodigality of Prince Edward was such that the weekly allowance assigned him by his father had long proved wholly inadequate either to his pleasures or necessities, and when the king's treasurer refused to advance him more money, and gave him honest advice for his conduct, he broke out into the most opprobrious language, "maltreated" the bishop, and not satisfied with heaping personal abuse upon him, made havoc in his park by demolishing its enclosures, killing his deer, and committing other outrages.

Our "English Justinian" had too high a sense of law and order not to resent these insults to one of his chief ministers, whose office under him, apart from his dignity as a prelate, commanded reverence. The king therefore considered the outrage upon the bishop as a contempt offered to himself and his regal dignity. The result of this rank crop of the prince's wild oats, in the wide sowing of which he was so actively helped by the evil companionship of Gaveston, led to the imprisonment of both, a punishment to which the king, with that stern love of justice which commands our respect, sentenced his son 'on complaint brought unto him by Master Walter Langton, Bishop of Chester."

But even so severe a sentence launched against the heir to the crown of England failed to prove of lasting effect, for we find that on a later occasion a similar charge was brought, when the prince was in his twenty first year, of

having used abusive words toward the same minister. This repetition of a very ignoble offence, looking to the relative high rank of the parties, so incensed the royal father, that he forbade the prince to enter his court for nearly half a year, and further issued an order to the Exchequer that money and sustenance should be peremptorily denied to him and all his household. The Bishop of Chester, it appears, as the king's treasurer, had taken the liberty of reproving the prince for the follies into which Gaveston led him ;—such as associating with buffoons, singers, actors ; indulging in drink ; striking the bystanders on trivial occasions, &c. ;—and the resentment of the prince for this reproof occasioned the utterance of the gross and bitter words, of which the bishop had a second time to complain.

In the *Placita Roll* of 1304 there occurs an entry in which reference is thus made to the punishment inflicted on the Prince of Wales for this unprincely behaviour :—

“ Roger de Hecflham complained to the king, that whereas he was the justice appointed to hear and determine a dispute between Mary, the wife of William de Braose, plaintiff, and William de Brewes, defendant, respecting a sum of eight hundred marks, which she claimed from him, and had decided in favour of the former ; the said William, immediately after judgment was pronounced, contemptuously approached the bar, and asked the said Roger, in gross and upbraiding language, if he would defend that judgment ;—and he afterwards insulted him, in bitter and taunting terms, as he was going through the Exchequer-chamber, saying—‘ Roger, Roger, thou hast now obtained thy will of that thou hast long desired.’ ”

“ For this offence, William de Brewes being arraigned before the king and his council, acknowledged his guilt ; and because such contempt and disrespect, as well towards the king's ministers as towards the king himself or his court, are very odious to the king ; as hath of late expressly appeared when his majesty expelled from his household, for nearly half a year, his dearly-beloved son, Edward Prince of Wales, on account of certain improper words which he

had addressed to one of his ministers, and suffered him not to enter his presence until he had rendered satisfaction to the said officer for his offence, it was agreed by the king and his council, that the aforesaid William should proceed *unattired*, bareheaded, and holding a torch in his hand, from the King's Bench in Westminster Hall in full court, to the Exchequer, and there ask pardon from the aforesaid Roger, and make an apology for his trespass, and shall be afterwards committed to the Tower during the king's pleasure "

The pointed reference here made to the king's anger and stern rebuke of his heir naturally directs our thoughts to this passage in the life both of father and son. The wise king's painful consciousness of the young prince's weakness, and his own strong dislike to Gaveston as his son's chief seducer, are already well known. We have spoken of one distinguished man, indicated in the above extract, as the minister with whom the young prince had been brought into collision—Walter Langton, the king's treasurer. The heir apparent had a stated income payable out of the royal exchequer. Under such guidance as that of Gaveston, it was inevitable that this income would prove insufficient, and that urgent demands for larger supplies would naturally follow. Hence the quarrels and the violent language referred to in the sentence on William de Brewes.

Another glimpse of light on this subject is afforded by a letter from the prince to the Earl of Lincoln * in which he alludes to the disgrace into which he had just fallen —

"On Sunday, the 13th June, we came to Millhurst, where we found our lord the king, our father. On the Monday following, on account of certain words which, it had been reported to the king had taken place between us and the Bishop of Chester, he was so enraged with us, that he has forbidden us or any of our retinue to dare to enter his house, and he has forbidden all the people of his house

* The aged warrior Henry de Lacy—a powerful baron held in highest estimation by the sovereign—was the last earl of that family. His daughter Alice had married the prince's cousin, Thomas Plantagenet Earl of Lancaster.

hold and of the exchequer to give or lend us anything for the support of our household. We are staying at Midhurst to wait his pleasure and favour, and we shall follow after him, as well as we are able, at a distance of ten or twelve miles from his house, until we have been able to recover his good will; which we very much desire. Wherefore we especially entreat you, that on your return from Canterbury you would come towards us; for we have great need of your aid and counsel."

The firmness and severity of the king, in this instance, were of no ordinary kind, and we know from the after-life of the younger Edward that extreme severity was needed to control a character so weak and passionate. That the wild sallies and habitual excesses of the prince were justly imputed to the influence of Gaveston, who had now gained such an absolute ascendancy over him by flattering his humour and catering for his pleasures, seems very certain; for he, being himself, we read, "vain, lewd, voluptuous, and extravagant, had infected the prince with those vices." At this time the English king was too clearsighted not to discern the errors of his son, and although he received on the occasion of the previous escapade a promise from him to be guided in all things by his counsel, yet he had good reason to fear in future the irresistible influence of Gaveston over the prince's unstable mind during his own long and frequent absence with the army. He therefore now contemplated, not only the removal of the Gascon from the royal household, but the banishment from England of the dangerous favourite.

One or two extracts from other letters extant of the prince—written whilst under his father's displeasure, and who seems to have relented when his scapegrace son had made suitable amends for his offence—are interesting as indications of young Edward's docility and good nature, under somewhat trying circumstances. In July the prince writes to his brother-in-law, the Earl of Gloucester, to the following effect:—

"Because you have so kindly given up your goods to us,

we thank you very dearly, and we let you know that our lord the king, our father, does not consider himself so ill-treated by us as some people, perhaps, have made you believe, for he wishes, and has commanded, that we should have of his bounty whatever is needful for us" And this is confirmed by the fact that a sum of one hundred marks is paid about this time out of the king's wardrobe to his old tutor, Walter Reynaud, for the prince's current expenses.

In August he writes to his sister, the Countess of Gloucester, that he would very gladly come to her, "but that the king hath commanded his stay in those parts, &c near Wyndsores"

But though thus "sent to Coventry," there are proofs in abundance that the life he led was not a solitary one. His letters* speak of venison, spices and groceries, long swords for valets, small horns, and horses at a very high price. To his sister he writes for a white greyhound, and Hugh le Despenser is thanked for raisins and wine. To his reverend tutor he prefers a request that he will help him to some palfreys, saddles, and some new robes of fur and satin, in contemplation of the expected visit of Queen Mary, dowager of France, and her son "Monsire Lowys." One great point respecting which he entreated Queen Marguerite, his mother in law, was, that he might have two more valets, and that "Perot" (his familiar name for Piers de Gaveston) might be one of them.

At length—some time early in 1305—this profligate and incorrigible seducer, who had brought enmity between Edward and his heir, was banished from court by the much-enduring parent. His far seeing vision must then but too clearly have perceived that from his son's effeminacy, fickleness, and irresolution, together with his usual course of life, the glorious results with which his own arduous career had been so signally crowned would descend upon one who had neither the head nor the hand to retain them. How deeply,

* The above passages are taken from a curious roll recently discovered by Mr J. Deven in the Lords House containing copies or abstracts of between seven and eight hundred of the prince's letters.

how inexpressibly galling must have been the great Plantagenet's reflection—a rigid upholder, as he was, both of civil and military discipline—upon this vain and unvalued result of his ambitious career, looking to the dissolute and un-
aspiring heir to whom would fall the succession of his brilliant achievements! One-third of the realm of France—ever ready to throw off the English yoke, and recover those provinces of the south which had brought such princely jewels to the regal diadem of England by the marriage of Eleonora of Aquitaine with our first Plantagenet—had felt the irresistible might of his arm in the wars of repression. And the stern spirit of the hardy sons of Scotia, though temporarily bowed, was still unbroken, still threatening. The indomitable valour and energy of the Bruce—the patriot leader and the avenger of Wallace, and his implacable enemy—must have menaced him with a forecast of that retaliation which was destined so soon to befall his feeble successor at Bannockburn. Would the enervated grasp of Edward of Caernarvon retain its hold of those dominions when death had closed his eyes—much less finish the scheme of conquest he had begun? Would even the realm of England long own him as its lord paramount? Of this the past, very recent experience of his son's conduct gave little hope—nay, warranted the gravest apprehensions—so utterly had his licentious life conduced to the extinction of all that masculine energy and hardy virtue in which he himself had shone conspicuously.

Not that the young Plantagenet was wanting in physical courage; for at seventeen we find him leading a battalion against the Scots on the banks of the Irvine. In 1303 he was again with his father in the expedition against Bruce; and he then marked his course by such unsparing devastation, that the king, it is asserted, upbraided him with his cruelty. He had not the wisdom of his father to know that leniency is far more effective than terror, under many circumstances. But that the weak-minded and characterless are often cold and cruel, history affords numberless examples. And thus it seems to have been with Prince Edward.

At this crisis the evil tendencies of his nature were manifesting themselves, as we have seen, in the most obstinately offensive manner, under the example and encouragement of Gaveston. The profligacy of prince and favourite at length caused such umbrage, sorrow, and vexation to King Edward, that he determined upon banishment of the Gascon "because he gave bad counsel to his son, who loved him with inordinate affection."

Happy had it been for England and its misguided heir, had that unworthy favourite never again returned to its court.

It is worthy of notice that the king, while he was resolved upon Gaveston's removal and banishment, took care to do him no injustice, for he granted him a pension of one hundred marks, payable out of the revenues of Guienne, which was to commence from the day of his departure from these shores. It appears, however, that he did not immediately go abroad, but doubtless lurked in some friendly stronghold in the north of England—probably at Bramborough Castle—keeping up meanwhile correspondence with the heir apparent in the hope of bringing about his recall. The cunning Gascon knew that the king's health was fast declining, and doubtless speculated on the speedy succession of his infatuated patron, the Prince of Wales, and on the acquirement of all the power and wealth such an event would be likely to yield him.

Inconsistent as it seems with the great king's well known firmness of character, nevertheless, as the result of young Edward's ceaseless prayer and importunity, Gaveston was shortly afterwards recalled. The prince's instances were so unremitting that Gaveston should be received back into his service, that at length they were unhappily complied with, and Hemmingford tells us that, not content with having already greatly enriched his favourite, he next wished that titles and honours should be conferred upon him. That Edward of Caernarvon had it in his power, during his father's lifetime, to heap wealth upon the greedy Gascon, there is good reason to doubt. It seems, however, that he was rash enough to prefer a petition to the king, through the treasurer

Langton—of all other persons—that he might be graciously pleased to confer upon his restored favourite the title of Count of Ponthieu, together with all of that fair province as an appanage to the dignity. The wary bishop, though himself an especial favourite of the king, very unwillingly undertook to make such a preposterous request, doubtless anticipating an outburst of rage on the part of his royal master. Whatever the motive by which he was influenced, however, Langton sought the king's presence, and thus abruptly executed his commission: "My lord king," said he, "I come here on the part of my lord, the lord prince, your son, and unwillingly enough, as the living God is my witness. He requires that I should solicit, in his name, that the title of Count of Ponthieu should be conferred on the Lord Peter de Gaveston, his batchelor, if such might be done by your good permission."

The great Plantagenet listened to these words of Langton in silent astonishment; but ere they were scarcely spoken, almost inarticulate with rage, he exclaimed, "And by the living God, who art thou who darest ask such a thing? Had I not the fear of God before me, and the remembrance of what you said, that thou art an unwilling agent in this matter, thou shouldst not escape rough treatment. But now I will see what he has to say who sent thee hither! And stay thou meanwhile where thou art!"

On the prince presenting himself before his wrathful sire, the stern interrogation was launched in his ears,

"What business is this that thou hast sent this man upon?"

"To ask," tremblingly replied the young Edward, "with your permission, that Lord Piers de Gaveston be created Count de Ponthieu."

If what followed in word and deed on the part of Edward I. be correctly reported, that irascible monarch seems to have been wrought beyond the bounds of reason, decorum, and even the respect due to the memory of his beloved queen, Eleanor.

"Oh, ill-begotten son of a wanton mother!" shouted the incensed king, "*thou* art in the mood to give away lands—

thou who hast never won any!" Then changing taunts for threats, and with lips livid with anger, he cried out, "God alive! were it not that the kingdom might fall into anarchy, I would take care that thou shouldst never come to thine inheritance" And so saying, he seized the kneeling prince by his long waving locks, and clutching them with both hands, tore away the hair by handfuls, and as much of it as he was able,—"*dilaceravit eos in quantum potuit*," relates the chronicler. He then forthwith ordered the prince under arrest, and summoned Gaveston to appear before a council, over which he himself presided. The unworthy favourite was there bound by an oath never to accept a gift of lands from the prince, be the king living or dead. A sentence of perpetual exile was next passed upon him, and a certain day fixed, by which time, had he not quitted the realm, his life would be forfeited. An oath was also imposed upon the Prince of Wales not to recall or receive Piers without his father's sanction, and never to confer on Gaveston titles and estates, which the latter had already sworn he would never receive at his hands.

The murder of "Red" Comyn, the son of Baliol's sister, having affixed the seal to the conspiracy of the Scottish nobles, they now resolved to shake off the yoke of England or perish in the attempt. At this juncture the health of the royal warrior of England was rapidly declining, and just when he thought success had finally crowned his arms, a new enemy came into the field, with attributes in many respects superior to even those of Wallace,—for Bruce was next in succession to the Scottish crown, was high enough in rank to command the submission of the proudest nobles, and had the intuitive quickness of eye and firmness of decision which constitute the best qualities of a ruler, either in peace or war. Bruce was solemnly crowned and inaugurated in the abbey of Scone, and shortly afterwards the English were all chased out of Scotland. Tidings of these events reached Edward at Winchester in 1306. With all the king's foresight and energy, it was a sudden surprise, and awakened in him feelings of the greatest indignation. We can easily

imagine the rage of Edward on receiving this information. As a knight and a soldier, Edward's vehement decision seemed at once to be taken,—that for Bruce and his abettors there was to be no more mercy. The blood of Comyn should be heavily avenged. His feelings seem evidently to have been shared by his people. In preparation for the expedition, a grand religious ceremony was announced to take place on the Feast of Pentecost, in Westminster Abbey, and it was probably with the hope of arousing in his son's mind some spark of chivalrous feeling that the king proposed to confer knighthood on the young prince, and on other young men of rank, his companions. Nearly three hundred of the younger nobility and gentry were candidates for this honour, and all very eager to take part in the new enterprise. As there was not room within the precincts of the palace, these noble youths, with their pages and retinues, bivouacked in the Temple Gardens, the trees of which were cut down in order that they might pitch their tents. There, agreeably to the custom of chivalry, they watched their arms all that night, and on the morrow repaired to Westminster, where Prince Edward was knighted in the hall of the palace, and the young prince, in the abbey church, conferred the same honour on his two hundred companions. So vast was the concourse of people in the abbey, that some persons were crushed to death in the throng. The king, too weak to expose himself to the heat caused by the crowd, was scarcely able to perform his part; but at the banquet which followed, he took a solemn oath according to the laws of chivalry. It was the custom of the new knight to make a vow, the object of which was generally suggested by the circumstances of the time. The vows of chivalry, however, were not taken on the Gospels, but, ridiculous as it may appear, in the presence of a peacock or heron, or other bird of beautiful plumage. During the royal banquet, the minstrels placed on the table two swans in nets of gold. The king immediately vowed, before God and the swans, that he would revenge the death of Comyn and punish the perfidy of the rebels; and then addressing the company, con-

jured them, in the event of his death in the expedition, to keep his body unburied till they had enabled his son to accomplish his vow, and that when that work was done, he would embark for the Holy Land, and leave his body in that hallowed soil. The son swore that he would not sleep two nights in the same place till he had entered Scotland to execute his father's commands. The rest applauded his oath and imitated his example. The next morning, the prince, with his knight companions, departed for the borders; Edward himself, now in his sixty eighth year, followed by easy journeys, and his military tenants received writs to join him at Carlisle in the beginning of July.

This "model of a politic and warlike king"—a prince unequalled by any who had reigned in England since the Conqueror, for prudence, valour, vigour, and success—expired somewhat suddenly near Carlisle, July 7, 1307, in his sixty-ninth year. His last hours were spent in vainly endeavouring to impress upon his son some obvious lessons of prudence and firm resolve—lessons, indeed, really needed, but which the young prince seemed mentally incapable of receiving. He enjoined upon him, under pain of his paternal malediction, never to permit the return of Gaveston—to send his heart into the Holy Land, which he bequeathed to the trusteeship of one hundred and forty knights, for whose expenses he had provided the sum of two and thirty thousand pounds of silver, and he invoked eternal damnation on the head of him who should turn this money to any other use. He urged him forthwith, and once for all, to put down the Scottish revolt, the means of which were all prepared and ready to his hand. So earnestly and enthusiastically did he feel on this point, that he desired his son to carry, after his death, his bones at the head of his army, so that he, before whose charge no Scottish army had ever been able to stand, might, even after death, be still in some sort present in the first shock of battle.

But he spoke to ears which had already been closed, by luxury and dissipation, against all high and noble counsels. Not one of his commands was obeyed. The young king

no sooner saw the power and splendour of royalty within his grasp, than he turned his back at once on the calls of honour and duty. The great and all-important object of putting down the insurrection in Scotland was disregarded. The forward march was countermanded, the anticipations of Bruce were fully realized, and the union of the two kingdoms—the great object of Edward's labours during the last ten years—was forgotten and practically abandoned.

II.

THE RISE AND FALL OF PIERS DE GAVESTON.

A NEW reign and a young sovereign are always popular. Edward of Caernarvon was in his twenty-third year when he acceded to the throne with every political advantage. All combined to surround the young and handsome Plantagenet with glory, and inaugurate his reign with peculiar splendour and felicity. It would seem to have required no common infatuation to have thrown down any prince from such a pedestal as that on which he was as firmly as he was highly exalted. Love, honour, and happiness seemed to be his natural inheritance. Contempt, degradation, and misery became his lot.

Shortly after his father's death, Edward II. had received at Carlisle the homage of the English barons, and at Dumfries that of certain of the Scottish nobles. Here he trifled away his time in receiving submissions, without taking any vigorous measures for the reduction of Robert Bruce and his followers, who were daily becoming more formidable. His easy, frivolous, and splendour-loving mind was more set upon the pomp and pageantry connected with the fealty and homage paid him on his accession than the rough and toilsome pursuit of "grim-visaged war." Though at the head of a mighty army, he allowed the campaign to languish, and advanced no further than Cumnock, in Ayrshire, where he

remained only a few days. Becoming weary of even the shadow of war, and impatient to embrace his returning favourite Gaveston, he constituted Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, Guardian of Scotland, and returned south hastily. The apparent pusillanimity with which he withdrew from a struggle so long and vigorously maintained by his father, and in direct opposition to his dying injunctions, has deservedly subjected him to the contempt of all ages.

The first transactions of Edward's reign, therefore, gave his subjects very unfavourable impressions both of the disposition and abilities of their new king, and the events which followed served still further to confirm these impressions. Continuing to act with all the rashness and precipitation of a weak mind, the foremost object of the infatuated prince had been the recall of his banished favourite, and he did not even await Gaveston's return to England ere he heaped upon him the tokens of his insensate affection. The first regal boon bestowed was nothing less than the Isle of Man—a sort of petty sovereignty in itself—with the addition of the thirty-two thousand pounds in silver religiously set apart by the deceased king for the maintenance of one hundred and forty knights appointed to carry his heart to the Holy Land. On Gaveston's arrival, Edward created him Earl of Cornwall—an honour then, as now, usually reserved for the royal family—to which he added a grant of all the lands, lately fallen to the crown, that had belonged to his cousin Edmund of Almaine, son of Richard, titular King of the Romans. As soon as Gaveston reappeared at court, the lieges of the Plantagenet found to their disgust that *two* kings demanded obedience from them—one in fact, another only in name—the *aller et ego* in this case being Piers de Gaveston, Earl of Cornwall, and King Edward II. It must have been a pitiful reverse for the proud barons and gallant knights of this wide and noble realm to brook the exchange of the rule of the late victorious soldier king and sagacious legislator for that of an emasculate and favourite ridden voluptuary.

Gaveston joined his royal master before he left Scotland, and his arrival was followed by an immediate and total change in the offices of government. The faithful servants of the late monarch, as might be expected, were the first who felt the fatal effects of the favourite's unbounded sway. Before even his father's body had reached London, Edward turned out of their places the chancellor, barons of the Exchequer, as well as the judges of both benches; and cherishing the old grudge against Langton—who by refusing to supply money for their pleasures had incurred the lasting enmity of the prince and Gaveston—the treasurer was stripped of all his property and thrown into prison. The places of these discarded ministers and functionaries were filled by creatures of the favourite. In defiance of his father's prohibition, Edward ventured to bury the late king's bones at Westminster, and gave the money destined for the Holy War to Gaveston, whom he daily loaded with new honours. And in November, 1307, as if not yet weary of conferring benefits on his beloved Gascon, his royal master gave a still stronger proof of an unbounded affection by allying him with the royal family, bestowing on him the hand of his own niece, the Princess Margaret de Clare, sister of the young Earl of Gloucester, and daughter of his own sister, Joanna of Acre, who had married Gilbert de Clare, the former earl. He also granted him the honours, or great manors, of Wallingford, St. Valery, and Knaresborough; the chase of, or right of hunting over Dartmoor; the whole of the county of Cornwall, and all the estates of Edmund, late Earl of Cornwall. Further, he was made Great Chamberlain of England, and the king's secretary, a post which rendered him not only the confidant of his master's secrets, but his chief minister in all affairs. Nay, when this insensate young man sailed to Boulogne, in January, 1308, to celebrate his nuptials with the Princess Isabella, daughter of Philip *le Bel*, to whom he had already been espoused by proxy, passing by the princes of the blood and all the ancient nobility of England, he constituted

Gaveston Regent of the Realm in his absence, with more extensive powers than had ever been granted to any former guardian

Such an astonishing prodigality of royal favour was enough to have excited envy against any person of the greatest prudence and humility. But these virtues constituted no part of the character of this audacious foreigner. On the contrary, Gaveston, though tasteful amidst his profuse magnificence, was vain and insolent in the highest degree, and made the most ostentatious and provoking displays of his personal accomplishments, power, and wealth. Some of the highest nobility he offended by his satirical wit, and constantly amused himself and the king by turning certain sturdy but uncultivated barons into ridicule—publicly taunting them with derisive nicknames—calling the Earl of Gloucester, cousin to the king, “cuckold’s bird,” the “gentil comte” de Lancaster, the king’s nephew, “the stage player,” the stout Earl of Pembroke, “Joseph the Jew,” because he was pale and tall, and the Earl of Warwick, who had a sallow complexion, “the black dog of Arden.” Edward delighted to encourage this presumptuous folly, and such dangerous sarcasms were obviously employed by the Gascon for the malicious amusement of the king, for it was remarked that if any of the barons entered the royal chamber while Gaveston was there, his smiles and conversation were wholly addressed to the giddy and obnoxious favourite. Even the tributes of respect offered by his people the king did not venture to take without Gaveston’s participation and permission. Walter de Whitlacet, one of the monks of Peterborough, gives a remarkable instance of this. When the king, with Gaveston, visited that place, the abbot sent him a cup worth fifty pounds. The king immediately inquired whether Piers had received any present, and being answered in the negative, he refused to accept the gift. The abbot hearing of this, sent to Gaveston a cup of the value of forty pounds, who took it with a courteous air and thanks. The messenger then asking the favourite if the other cup were worthy of the

king's acceptance, and being told it was, he mentioned to Piers that it had been refused. Gaveston called his chamberlain, and gave him these orders: "Go to Lord Edward, and tell him that I am willing that he should receive the abbot's present." The officer carried the rejected cup to Edward with this message, and the king then eagerly took it, and thanked the abbot for his liberality.*

His arrogance and wilful insolence increasing with his master's favour, which opposition only stimulated to fresh extravagance, he publicly challenged all comers throughout the kingdom to tilt with him in the lists. Thus whilst he offended some of the first men of the realm by his jeers and scoffs and biting wit, he affronted the vanity of others by his superior prowess in that favourite diversion of the martial spirits of the day. At a great tournament held early in December, 1307, on the occasion of his marriage, at his castle of Wallingford, to which he invited various foreign knights highly skilled in that warlike sport, and who were more than a match for the English, he did not hesitate to avail himself of treachery also to secure the victory to his side. The king, to heighten his own satisfaction and increase the renown of his favourite, himself proclaimed this tournament, to be held of sixty knights on a side; not doubting that the honour of the day would remain to Piers, who, himself admirably skilled in the use of the lance and a perfect horseman, had also by means of his own largesse and the royal influence contrived to engage on his side some of the youngest and most robust knights in the realm. The wary Gascon having heard that a band of stout lances were approaching to join his adversaries, he furtively sallied out of the place at the head of two hundred followers, attacked and dispersed them. The force of the earls thus weakened, Gaveston gained the superiority in that day's lists, unhorsing and rolling in the dust, amongst others, the Earls de Warenne, Hereford, and Arundel.

The causes of the enmity of the English nobles, therefore,

* "Wal. Whytt. Cenob. Burg. Hist.," p. 171.

to Gaveston, are to be sought not merely in their patriotism or their national or family pride, the personal vanity of many of them had been wounded on many occasions. He had vanquished them in the lists, and had held them up to derision by fixing nicknames to many of them. Further, he enraged them all by wholly engrossing the royal favour and bounty, and depriving them of that share in the confidence and liberality of their sovereign, and in the management of public affairs, to which they thought themselves entitled by their birth and station. His rapacity and unscrupulousness were on a par. In proof of which we may instance that in order to defray the necessary expenses of the late king's funeral, and the approaching marriage and coronation of Edward, the citizens and burgesses after giving each a fifteenth, the barons and knights of shires a twentieth, they carried their complaisance so far as to ordain that, on pain of life and limb, the base money which would not pass in the late king's lifetime should be current coin of the realm. This was extorted from them at the instance of the king, acting upon the suggestions of Gaveston, who, having the disposal of all the crown revenue, carried on extensive financial operations with foreign merchants and bankers, and is said to have remitted abroad by their means in this single year (1307) no less than 100,000*l* sterling—a large sum in those days—out of the late king's treasure. Conscious of the precarious footing he held in the English court, his sole endeavour seems to have been to amass wealth, to strip the treasury of its ornaments as well as its money, and to send all he could lay hands on into foreign countries for security. Before his exile to Ireland he is stated to have conveyed the "table and trestles of gold from the treasury of Westminster, and delivered them" to a messenger to be carried into Gascony, together with a large amount of treasure. Nothing of value, whether great or small, seems to have come amiss to his greedy grasp, for when Philip *le Bel*, on the occasion of his daughter's marriage, made Edward very sumptuous presents of fine horses, rings, jewels, and costly curiosities of various kinds, they were all imme-

diately sent over to the favourite, even before the royal couple departed for England.

Edward returned from France accompanied by a splendid train of French princes and noblemen whom he had invited to the coronation. On landing at Dover they were met by Gaveston and the flower of the English nobility, who came to salute and welcome their young and beautiful queen. On seeing his favourite approach, the king, unmindful of his consort, his princely guests, or his own nobles, threw himself into the arms of Gaveston, "hugged and kissed him, and called him brother." This unseemly conduct not only disgusted the whole court, but greatly displeased two of the queen's uncles who had come over in the royal train from Boulogne. Thus, while this upstart Gascon was beloved beyond measure by his deluded sovereign, he was hated and abhorred with the greatest violence both by the nobility and common people. Neither could be prevailed upon to show him the least respect, or call him by any other name than that of Piers Gaveston, though a ridiculous proclamation was issued by the king "commanding all men to give him the title of *Earl of Cornwall* in common conversation." The extravagant passion of Edward went, indeed, to such an extent, that he was often heard to say that if his power equalled his affection he would set Gaveston on the throne itself.

The peers had been summoned to attend the coronation of Edward and Isabella in the month succeeding their nuptials, but deeply incensed at the outrageous and repeated insults to which they had been subjected, signified to the king that they would not grace it with their presence unless Gaveston were sent out of the kingdom. Edward, who loved pomp and show, was the more startled at the intimation because the lords were wont to do homage at that solemnity, and he was anxious to engage their fidelity by that sacred obligation. He therefore desired that his coronation might not be deferred, and promised to grant their request regarding the dismissal of his favourite in the next parliament, to be held a fortnight after the approaching

Easter The nobility thereupon agreed to be present, and assisted at the court of claims, at the committee appointed to regulate the order of the procession, and the carrying of the regalia and sacred vessels The coronation was marked by great magnificence, the Bishop of Winchester, in the absence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, performing the ceremony, and in the questions which he then put to the new king, and which are carefully recorded both in French and Latin, we perceive the strong anxiety of the leading nobles that Edward should be pledged at the very altar, and under the most solemn rites, to protect the liberties of the land

The thoughtless and unstable young king did, indeed, pledge himself, and promise on oath, to "grant and guard and confirm the laws and customs granted to the people of England by the glorious king St Edward" his predecessor But of little avail were these solemn promises, as the country too soon discovered Even on that very day, the honours he bestowed on Gaveston showed how little was the newly consecrated monarch inclined to yield to public opinion In the solemn procession the upstart favourite was selected to walk immediately before the king!—the place appropriated only to the highest nobility—bearing that precious relic the crown of St Edward the Confessor, and although the chief magnates of England, and Charles, afterwards king of France, and the Earl of Luxembourg, afterwards Emperor of Germany, and the Duke of Brittany, and Louis, uncle to the queen, were present, "yet," remarks the indignant chronicler, "Piers de Gaveston in noble apparel transcended them all * This insolent conduct in an age distinguished by strict attention to sumptuary laws, while it excited the anger of the English nobility, aroused the bitterest feelings of Louis of France, who doubtless foresaw little probability of happiness for his young niece while her husband was thus preposterously swayed by his favourite So enraged was one of the earls at the ostentatious appearance and bearing of Gaveston, that he was tempted to slay him

on the spot, and was not easily dissuaded from his purpose even by the apprehensions of a tumult. Piers, moreover, assumed the supreme direction of the ceremony; but being less solicitous concerning the royal dignity than of cutting a figure himself, there was no order or management in any part of it. The crowd was so great and disorderly, that Sir John Blackwell and some others were squeezed to death. The bishops were incommoded, and were forced to hurry over the service, yet it was not ended till after three in the afternoon.

The indignation, therefore, of those who stood nearest the throne, now knew no bounds. Three days after the coronation, the barons met and petitioned the king to banish Gaveston. Amongst the chief personages who distinguished themselves in these proceedings against the royal favourite were, the Earl of Arundel, a man of large possessions, the Earl of Warwick, also a most powerful nobleman, De Valence, Earl of Pembroke, grandson of Isabel of Angoulême by her second marriage, De Bohun, Earl of Hereford, who was allied to the king, and chief among them, Earl Thomas of Lancaster. This illustrious nobleman was cousin-german to the king, and first prince of the blood, being the eldest son of Edmund Crouchback, whom he succeeded in the three earldoms of Lancaster, Leicester, and Ferrars. On his mother's side he was son, half-brother, and uncle to three queens, Blanche of Navarre, Joan, heiress of Navarre and Queen of France, and Isabella, Queen of England, and his already immense estates were further increased by his marriage with the heiress of De Lacie, Earl of Salisbury and Lincoln. A man so nobly and so royally connected would scarcely have taken a prominent part in public affairs unless urged by principle, and Walsingham relates that the dying injunction of his father-in-law, De Lacie, first induced him to come forth "to repair the evils which misgovernment had brought on the kingdom." It is therefore stated that he, in the first instance, "sent honourable messengers to the king to cause him to exile Gaveston, but the king, led away by sinister counsels,"

refused to profit by the wise advice, and from henceforward Earl Thomas of Lancaster became unremitting in his endeavours to rescue his cousin from the bondage of his favourite.

Gaveston had now climbed to the highest pinnacle of ill-reached power, and was in effect master of the realm. If any earl or great baron had a favour to ask, he was at once referred to the favourite, and what he said or ordered was done immediately. The lofty spirit of the English nobility naturally chafed under such indignity and humiliation, and so besotted was Gaveston as the haughty dispenser of the royal favours, that the grace at least, if not the merit of all he did in any one's behalf, was destroyed by his arrogance. He continually strove to show his superiority over the peers and ministers, and to outbrave them on all public occasions. He had thus made preparations to appear at the coronation with a splendour and magnificence that should outvie the loftiest in the land, and had flaunted in robes of cloth of gold glittering with the crown jewels, with which they were thickly embroidered, eclipsing not only the nobility, but the king himself. The high honour of carrying the crown before the king also gave mortal offence to the ancient nobility, and indeed aroused a wide and general indignation. So that, on the favourite proclaiming a tournament to be held at Faversham in February (1308), in honour of the king's marriage, none of the nobility graced it with their presence, having a sufficient reason for their absence afforded them by the unchivalrous trick he had recently played at the Wallingford jousting. Those powerful nobles, the Earls de Warenne, Hereford, and Arundel, were highly incensed at the disgrace of being foiled on that occasion by the superior force or address of their adversaries, and the use Gaveston made of their not appearing in the lists at Faversham was in keeping with the insolence of his nature—for, like a true Gascon, he taunted them with cowardice, and openly derided them in all public places.

The only immediate result of the petition for Gaveston's banishment on the part of the confederated barons was that Edward contrived to put off his angry lieges till the Easter

following ; but he was then obliged to comply. Gaveston himself was made to swear that he would never return, and the bishops pronounced him excommunicate if he broke his oath. Thus foiled by his parliament, Edward determined to neutralize as far as possible its sentence. He therefore appointed him governor of Ireland, and assigning him the whole of its dues, and making him new grants of estates, himself accompanied his banished favourite as far as Bristol, whence he embarked as viceroy to his place of exile, and “where,” says the chronicler, “he lived in regal splendour.”

The greater part of the succeeding year of 1309 was passed in efforts on the part of Edward to recall his favourite, and stern resistance and indirect menace on the part of his nobles. Not long after, the king—either in defiance of the baronial confederates, or that, Gaveston being no longer present, their resentment had gradually cooled—recalled Gaveston (whom the Pope absolved from his oath), and went down to Chester to meet him on his return from Ireland, and carried him to Langley, in Hertfordshire, where he kept him some time to himself ; not caring to be diverted by the queen, his ministers, or others, a moment from enjoying his company. And thus, from the earliest days of her marriage, the young and beautiful Isabella, a stranger in a strange land, saw herself an unloved and neglected wife ; and thus again did Gaveston become “confidant and ruler of the king, whereat almost all the lords and prelates were greatly annoyed.” Nor was it strange they should be. Gaveston had been welcomed back by the king with the most disgraceful fondness, and viewing his royal master’s infatuated attachment as a license to act as he pleased, he again insulted the first nobles of the land, set the laws at defiance, and continued his former habits of rapacity and extravagance.

The barons, disunited and seeing no remedy, stifled their uneasiness, and Gaveston might probably have been suffered to continue about his master, had it been possible to make him wiser by experience. Matters were so well prepared for this purpose, that in a parliament which met at Stamford the king prevailed with the earls and barons to consent that

his favourite might remain in England unmolested. This compliance flattering Gaveston's vanity, made him easily imagine that he had got the better of his adversaries, and was secure from all future attacks: though had he been capable of reflection, he might have observed, even in the midst of his triumphs on that occasion, an universal hatred of him among the people, and a smothered animosity among the great men, likely to burst out sooner or later to his ruin. Edward sharing his recklessness, was lavish in expenditure for festivals, tournaments, and rejoicings, intended to display his favourite's unrivalled accomplishments: but none of the earls or barons appeared in any of them; and the lists and pillars erected for a tournament at Kennington, in Surrey, were demolished in the night by persons unknown. Gaveston, greedy and prodigal in his nature, went on in his usual manner, living at greater expense than the king himself; and being still supplied out of the treasury, the *fire and twentieth*, granted in a parliament held after Easter, was soon consumed or anticipated, and there were great difficulties in finding subsistence for the royal household. Even such immense sacrifices did not yet satisfy the ambitious and prodigal favourite. "He pillaged the king after such a fashion," says Duchesne,* "that frequently he had not enough in hand wherewith to furnish needful supplies for his household, and reduced even Queen Isabella to such necessity that she was ultimately constrained to apprise King Philip her father of the fact." The young queen also complained that Gaveston, unable to support with moderation such a tide of prosperity, had, intoxicated with his power over all, become so haughty and insolent that she herself had become a mark for the shafts of his malignity. He moreover endeavoured to purchase himself friends by his power of disposing of all places of trust and profit, and by like methods of corruption. But those with whom he tampered were little, vernal people, unable to do him service any further than enabled by the employments he gave them; and their friendship expired with his pro-

* Hist. d'Angleterre.

perity. None of them—as he complained, very feelingly at his death—offering to support him in his distresses. By this method also he disobliged all who were dismissed to make way for his own creatures—the great men being offended at such proceedings, and particularly the Earl of Lancaster, who vowed revenge on him for turning one of his knights out of an office. These discontents, however, did not put him on his guard; he became rather more insolent, if possible, than before, treating the nobility with greater contempt, making them constantly the subject of his jests and sarcasms, overwhelming them with scorn, and exasperating them by his bitter raillery, in common discourse; not sparing those even of the first dignity.

The hatred with which such personal discourtesy and undue assumption of superiority must necessarily have inspired the higher ranks about the court of Edward of Caernarvon was still further increased by the abuses of his prime minister and favourite's most tyrannic administration, who, both by his concessions and violence, had rendered himself the object of general execration. The king, in order to avoid the gathering storm, made a progress into the North, and called a parliament to meet at York in October, in which Gaveston took his place as Earl of Cornwall. But the discontented and now confederated barons, alleging dread of danger to their persons from the power and treachery of the favourite, refused to attend this parliament, which for that reason was adjourned, to meet at the same place in the following spring (13 Feb. 1310). The same cause rendered this second meeting ineffectual. The king, who was in great distress for money, being at length convinced that he could obtain no aid from his parliament while the object of his affection and their detestation was in view, resolved to part with his favourite for a time; and Gaveston, perceiving the danger of his position and the difficulties into which he had brought the king, escaped to the Continent.

The barons, somewhat appeased by their apparent triumph, but resolved to follow up their present advantage, met at Westminster in the spring of 1310, and as they were wont

when intending to intimidate their sovereign, came attended by their armed retainers. After a stormy session the king was obliged to consent to the appointment of a committee of eight earls, seven bishops, and six barons, who under the title of *Ordainers* were to regulate his household and redress the national grievances. He then proceeded to the North, where he was again joined by Gaveston, on whom he lavished more wealth and honours. He entered Scotland and advanced to the Forth, he passed the winter at Berwick, and in the spring (1311) he committed the conduct of the war to his favourite, in order that he might gather laurels and abate the general odium against him. Piers had done great service, when governor of Ireland, in reducing the predatory tribes who lived among the mountains near Dublin, and in suppressing some disturbances in Munster and Connaught, and he distinguished himself by his bravery and skilful conduct in this expedition, advancing beyond the Frith of Forth, and defeating the enemy in some encounters. In August, Edward returned to London to receive the *Articles of Reform*, which had been drawn up by the twelve Ordainers. These articles tended chiefly to limit the excesses of the royal authority, and to give parliament a control in the appointment of public officers, a general one for removing all evil counsellors from about the king, and substituting fitter persons, as well in their offices as in those of the household, including even his menial servants. A MS in the Cottonian Library* mentions the names of a large number of persons whose dismissal was particularly required, besides the general demand for removing all the relatives and creatures of Gaveston who, through his interest, had received appointments, but the parliament roll of this year specifies only the favourite, Henry de Beaumont, and the Lady Vesci. The crime of this nobleman and his sister, a woman of beauty and intrigue, was the procuring grants from the king to his dishonour and the damage of the crown. The strong castle of Bamborough, which this royal leman had got for herself, was resumed into the king's hands, and

* British Museum. Class 94, D L.

she was banished the court for ever. Her brother, the Lord Beaumont, underwent the same sentence; and Piers de Gaveston, charged with "giving the king bad advice, with placing his own creatures about him, estranging his heart from his people, embezzling his treasure and sending it beyond sea, procuring grants, and getting the great seal put to blank charters, to the depauperation of the crown; maintaining robbers and homicides, and getting the king to pardon them; arrogating to himself the royal power and dignity, and forming associations upon oath with people to live and die with him against all persons whatsoever," was for these misdemeanours banished for ever out of all the king's dominions, either on this side or beyond the sea, and was to quit them before the 1st of November. Dover was assigned for the place of his embarking: and if found in England, or in any other of the king's dominions, after that day, he was to be treated as an enemy to the king, kingdom, and people. In tracing Gaveston's ultimate fate, it is proper to bear in mind the fact that this sentence was never *legally* revoked.

When the sentence was passed, the falling favourite, driven a third time from the realm by the national execration, withdrew to France. The French king, Philip *le Bel*, most probably indignant that the man who had caused his daughter's unhappiness should seek refuge in his dominions, gave orders for his seizure, and it was only by flight into Flanders that the exiled favourite escaped. But a life of difficulty and obscurity was insupportable to a man spoilt by royal favour and courtly luxuries. Whether privately summoned by the king, or presuming on that monarch's wonted fatuity, Gaveston soon after suddenly returned to England, and sometimes secreted in the king's chamber, sometimes barred and bolted at Wallingford, and sometimes seeking the more distant asylum of Tintagel Castle, the outlawed favourite, ever anxious to emerge into his former splendour, but pursued too vindictively to dare it, continued to lurk about, not indeed unsuspected, but undiscovered. He next made an ineffectual attempt to obtain shelter in

Scotland, but the answer of Bruce, as recorded by the Monk of Malmesbury, a contemporary, proves forcibly the view which the monarchs of that day took of his case. "How can the King of England keep his treaty with *me*, if he does not keep his oath to his own liegemen?" was the emphatic reply. At length weary of lying hidden, he appeared, with a second sentence of outlawry still unrepealed hanging over him, at court, and was received by the imbecile Edward with unrestrained joy.

The justly enraged barons once more assembled; the Archbishop of Canterbury excommunicated Gaveston; but unmoved by the threatening storm, Edward spent his Christmas in Sybaritic ease, and remained until spring at York, breaking the lingering day with wine, feasting and merriment, and celebrating the churching of his favourite's wife with a magnificence which could scarcely have been exceeded had the queen herself been the object. As spring advanced the barons put themselves in warlike array, and the Earl of Lancaster having proclaimed a tournament as a pretext for their assembling in arms, they marched towards York. Whether Edward quitted that city on learning their intentions, is uncertain. His favourite fled for safety to the strong castle of Bamborough, and from an entry in the wardrobe accounts, it is recorded that Geoffry de Selleng, butler to the Countess of Cornwall, received "for bringing good news of the earl," 50*l*!—a sum so extravagant, that it is only to be accounted for by supposing that at this juncture the favourite had escaped some great and imminent danger. There is a previous entry, dated in September, in which two shillings are given to "Walter the saddler, a forster of Shrewood," coming to the burg at Hadley with letters from Gaveston, "beseeching pardon for *laving slain a man*." Might not this also have probably been in some effectual attempt to seize him soon after his return?

The barons now declared unanimously, that there could be no peace in the realm, that the king could have no treasure, nor the queen her becoming followers, nor the great the suitable talk and consideration, while Gaveston was

alive. They made the Earl of Lancaster—the most powerful of all the scions of the blood royal, for his estates comprised five English counties—formally their leader. They presented their petitions to their sovereign, who, refusing all compliance, hastily quitted York for Newcastle. The barons followed. The king withdrew with his Piers to Tynemouth. The barons soon reached that town; and, as they entered it, the king, says Walsingham, “demanded a vessel, and though the pregnant queen with many tears prayed him to stay with her, he had not the least pity for her,” refused to part with Gaveston, and hurrying with him on board, sailed down to Scarborough.

But Edward's solicitude for that unworthy favourite for whose safety he had deserted his beautiful wife—soon about to become a mother—was vain. The noble castle—towering above the lofty cliff which beetles over the waters of the stormy North Sea—had no provisions; and pursued by the barons, Edward was at length compelled to fly to York, leaving Gaveston behind, pent up in that strong, weather-beaten Norman keep. The beleaguered minion—neither a coward nor a fool—stood bravely several assaults from the Earls of Surrey and Pembroke; but seeing no hopes of relief, and fearing that he should at last be driven by famine to surrender at discretion, by the king's advice—who hoped shortly to raise and march an army to relieve him—made a capitulation with Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, and Henry de Percy. The earl swore that he should be kept safe in their custody till the 1st of August following; that in the meantime endeavours should be used for bringing about a general accommodation; but if that did not take place, he should then be restored to the castle at Scarborough, in the same condition in which he left it: and for the *observance* of these conditions these two noblemen pledged all their lands. It seems scarcely fair to charge de Valence, although his conduct all along was far from chivalrous, with perjury. That he performed his office carelessly and unwillingly, there is, however, full reason to believe. On the road to Wallingford with his prisoner, Pembroke halted at the castle of

Dedington, between Oxford and Warwick. "You are fatigued," said the earl to him, "and need refreshment; I have business; you may remain here till I return;" and on pretence of meeting his countess somewhere in the neighbourhood, left him under the care of a slender guard. Pembroke, who was under oath, having thus on plausible grounds retired, Warwick, "the black dog of Arden," who had vowed to make Gaveston feel his teeth, now appeared upon the scene. The stern earl came at dawn of day with a small retinue to the castle, summoned the chamberlain, and bade him rouse his master from his bed. The alarmed favourite was compelled to dress hastily, descend to the court, and follow his vindictive foe on foot. As Gaveston walked forward slowly and unwillingly, he was placed on a mule to travel faster; and thus, surrounded by a strong guard, he was carried in insulting triumph to Warwick. As he entered the precincts of Guy's lofty tower,* he was received with loud yells and shouts mixed with a burst of military music, that must have rung ominously on his ear, and soon found himself in the presence of those haughty barons whom he had so often scorned and derided. It was now their turn to jeer and flout the helpless, fallen Gascon. His skill in the tournament, his courage in battle, his magnificent apparel, his jewelled rings, his high-sounding titles, his marriage with a princess of the blood, his reliance upon the kingly power, all were worthless in this terrible moment. Pembroke hearing of this movement against him, sued for his deliverance, pleading his own oath and danger. Gloucester answered him that Warwick had acted by the general advice, and that he must abide the chances of his own peril. Pembroke then went to Oxford, soliciting the clergy and citizens there to aid him in recovering Gaveston. They declined to interfere, and a council of the confederated barons was speedily formed by Warwick, at which Lancaster, Hereford, Arundel, and others assisted. Some one ventured to pro-

* So called after the ninth earl, "The Black Dog of Arden;" though there was also a famous Guy, Earl of Warwick, of another family in the twelfth century.

pose gentle measures, and to shed no blood; but a voice from one of the party present exclaimed, "You have caught the fox; if you let him go you will have to hunt him again." That hint decided Gaveston's fate. The certainty that the king would on the first possible occasion reinstate his favourite, and that their own lives might fall before his vengeance, determined them to put him to death, in direct violation of the articles of capitulation, but in accordance with the ordinance passed by parliament for his exile. Gaveston now stooped from his haughty insolence at the approach of death, and prayed for mercy from the Earl of Lancaster. Humbled and trembling he threw himself at the feet of the man he had derided as "the old hog," exclaiming, "Generous earl! pity me." But his previous sarcasms had blunted the earl's compassionate feelings. The only answer he received was the stern and vindictive command, "Take him away! take him away!" Out of that grim fortress—now the most beautiful of baronial piles throughout fair England, combining feudal strength with a more refined grandeur—was Gaveston led to execution. A short but hurried march on the road towards Coventry brought the cavalcade to Blacklow Hill, a little knoll on the road near Guy's Cliff, where "the judicial murder" was to be accomplished. The spot is marked by a monument not remarkable for elegance. The Avon glides beneath the hill, and the towers of Warwick rise above the surrounding woods. The historical interest of the scene associates in striking contrast with its natural beauty; and there, amidst the loveliest glimpses of rock, wood, and winding river mid-land England presents, they struck off his head.

The news of Gaveston's execution was received throughout the nation with astonishment and dismay. The annals of the kingdom furnished no similar execution since the Conquest. By the perpetrators themselves it was deemed a hazardous experiment; and on that account the victim had been conveyed to a spot within the jurisdiction of the Earl of Lancaster, whose greater power and relationship to the king appeared to screen him from danger. But they were

disappointed. A deed like this, whatever may have been Gaveston's demerits, was a foul and revengeful murder; and Lancaster lived to experience the severe retaliation which the shedding of human blood usually produces.

The first news of this event threw the king into the most violent transports of grief, which gradually sub-sided into a fixed purpose of revenge. * The head of his ill-fated favourite had been conveyed to Edward by a Grey-friar in his hood, and some of the same order subsequently arriving at the place of execution, Gaveston's body was buried in their church at Oxford.* The king had gone from York to Berwick just previous to the murder, but immediately returned towards the capital, and was joined on his way by Pembroke. The conduct of that nobleman (Pembroke) was open to much suspicion. It was generally believed that, as he had granted the capitulation to Gaveston without consulting the confederates, so, in order to satisfy them without exposing his own honour, he had purposely allowed his castle at Dedington to be forced by the Earl of Warwick. He succeeded, however, in convincing the king of his innocence, and proved his assertion by his subsequent attachment to the royal interests. Edward, on his way to London, roused himself to something like energy—summoned a parliament, vowed deadly vengeance on all concerned, solicited succours from France, and assembled a considerable body of forces. The barons stood in arms, and advanced to Ware to receive him; and for the remainder of the year they maintained a hostile attitude, but fought no battle. Conferences were held between the deputies of the king and of the barons, in the presence of the foreign ministers, and a form of reconciliation was unanimously adopted. The barons consented to solicit his pardon on their knees in Westminster Hall, and this pretended humility flattered him into compliance. It was therefore "with one accord assented and agreed, that no one, of what state or condition soever

* It was afterwards removed by the king, and interred in the new church at Langley, where Edward placed with his own hands two pairs of chain of gold on his tomb, at the second interment.

he be, in time to come, be appealed or challenged by reason of the taking, detaining, or death of Piers de Gaveston." At the same time an amnesty was granted to the adherents of Gaveston; and the property which was found in his possession was given up to the king. Nothing can more distinctly exhibit the infatuation of Edward than the inventory of this vast collection of plate and jewels, of which the treasury of the crown had been chiefly despoiled. Some of these golden and enamelled chains, buckles, crosses, cups, chaplets, coffers, girdles—set with diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds—bore the arms of England. Others are recited as gifts to the king from his sister and his friends. There was a ring which Saint Dunstan forged with his own hands; and not even the more sacred relic of an enamelled cup of gold, bequeathed to Edward by his mother Eleanor, was spared through the rapacity of the favourite. There are a hundred and ninety-six items of such costly property enumerated in the *Fœdera*,* and filling five pages, to some of which a value is affixed. One great ruby, which was found on Piers de Gaveston when he was taken, is estimated at the worth of a thousand pounds. This extraordinary document is an acquittance to Thomas of Lancaster, Guy of Warwick, Henry Percy, and Robert Clifford, for the valuables of which they had taken possession when Gaveston's head fell under the axe.

The barons implored Edward to confirm their deeds by proclaiming the late favourite a traitor. Here, however, Edward stood firm, and spurned their demand with indignation. But they had accomplished the great object of destroying the reigning favourite, and therefore were the more willing not to press the king too closely on other points. It was a new thing thus to brave the power and provoke the resentment of a king of England, not only by rebellion, but by destroying his bosom friend, minister, and chosen companion. So, at length, every difficulty being surmounted, a general amnesty was proclaimed; and the next day more than five hundred particular pardons were issued to the

* Vol. ii., part i., p. 203.

noblemen and knights who had been concerned in the confederacy

Piers de Gaveston undoubtedly possessed some interesting qualities, which might have made him useful to the king and people, if he had not been ruined by courtly pomp, varice, and luxury, and had not been seduced, by the king's womanish fondness, to an absurd and childish arrogance. From the six years' continuance of his power it is probable that he left some serviceable impressions on the court and nation. There must have been some elements of good in Gaveston, for the *Scala Chronica* says of him, "that at first he was noble, liberal, and gentil in summe facions." And Adam Murimuth having intimated that he was much loved in Ireland, adds, "for he was splendid and bountiful in giving presents, and in procuring honours and lands for his adherents." The Monk of Malmesbury also solemnly asserts, "I believe and firmly declare that if Piers had from the beginning conducted himself towards the great prudently and respectfully, none of them would have opposed him." What a lesson to pride and arrogance and to favourites is this just comment of a contemporary writer! But perhaps before any man can become a *favourite* of a prince, both must be equally unworthy. Judicious friendship is honourable and beneficial to the throne, favouritism ordinarily implies imbecility.

III

THE DEFENDERS AND ROGER MORTIMER

THE next great incident in this miserable reign—during which Edward, whilst struggling with his barons to preserve a favourite, had lost a crown—was the decisive battle of Bannockburn, closing the patriotic career of Bruce with brilliant lasting glory, and securing the independence of Scotland.

Although this unexpected disaster, added to a former

from a failing harvest, had excited dangerous clamours among the people, yet altogether heedless of pleasing his subjects, the irate but spiritless king celebrated his Christmas with great magnificence at Windsor ; and ere the feastings were over, he summoned the Archbishop of Canterbury and many prelates and abbots, and caused the body of his late favourite to be conveyed with royal splendour from the church of the Friars Preachers at Oxford, to Langley in Hertfordshire, where he had founded and richly endowed a house of that order. Had this obnoxious ceremony been merely the expression of the king's affection toward the memory of Gaveston, it would have been most impolitic, and, in the present state of the country, argued great weakness of mind ; but the marked pomp, and the time chosen, a time when the nobles could scarcely absent themselves from court without laying themselves open to suspicion of treason, seemed to prove that Edward was rather moved by his long-cherished feelings of revenge than by gentler motives. Few of the nobles, however, we are informed, attended.

Unwarned by the deplorable but assuredly well-merited fate of Gaveston, Edward could not live without a favourite, and little heeding the displeasure of his barons or the feelings of his queen, soon after the death of the regretted Gascon he conceived the same unbounded affection for Hugh le Despenser, to whose sway he yielded himself with even greater abjectness than to that of Gaveston.

Hugh was an Englishman born, and the son of an Englishman of ancient descent. He was accomplished, brave, and amiable ; but all these circumstances—which, except that of his birth, Gaveston had held in common with him—did not rescue him from the deadly hatred of the barons when they saw him suddenly raised above them all.

Edward married him to Eleanor, a younger daughter of the late Earl of Gloucester, and put him in possession of immense estates. Thus two of the nieces of Edward II., children of Joanna, third daughter of Edward I. by her first husband the Earl of Gloucester, had the misfortune to become wives to the favourites of Edward. Margaret was

married by her royal uncle, very shortly after her mother's death, to Piers de Gaveston, but from her heartless and capricious husband she received nothing but mortification and neglect, and she was at length divorced from him, and married to Hugh d'Audely, who obtained in her behalf the title of Earl of Gloucester. The wrongs endured by this unfortunate lady in her first marriage were among the most prominent grievances which inflamed the wrath of the barons against Gaveston and his weak master, who could thus tamely permit his niece, a princess of the blood, to be so insulted.

The new favourite, formerly a follower of Lancaster, had been obtruded on the king by his cousin to fill the office of chamberlain. This young man, unlike the previous favourite, was of noble birth and distinguished talents. His grandfather and great grandfather had both fought in the barons' wars against John and Henry, and his father, the elder Despensers, had been high in favour with Edward I, who made him governor of Odiham Castle, and appointed him one of the commissioners for peace between England and France. The favour which the first Edward displayed towards the elder Despensers was continued by the second, who made him governor of the castles of Devizes and Marlborough, but we find nothing more respecting either him or his son until the rise of the latter in the king's favour. Thus, from his talents and assiduity, was rapid, and he so acquired the esteem of the effeminate sovereign that the disposal of the royal favours was by degrees entrusted to his discretion, and his marriage with the daughter of the late Earl of Gloucester, who was killed at Bannockburn, gave him possession of the greater portion of the county of Glamorgan. The elder Despensers, at this time verging on four-score, appears to have been a worthy and honourable nobleman, his son, however, even according to his apologist Moor, was a very different character with commanding abilities with great personal beauty, he was haughty, reckless of right and wrong, and of immoderate ambition.

To be the king's favourite was but to incur death, yet it

was the peculiar character and defect of Edward's mind that he could not live without one.

The younger Despenser came first into collision with the barons under the following circumstances :—

It chanced that John de Mowbray had taken possession, without asking the royal license, of an estate belonging to his wife's father, and contiguous to the lands of the favourite. He pretended that he had only availed himself of the liberty of the Marches ; Despenser maintained that for the omission the fief was by law forfeited to the crown. The lords of the Marches immediately associated for the defence of their common rights, withdrew sullenly from court and parliament, and sought an opportunity to make their resentment felt by both the king and the young Despenser. It was just the sort of occasion for which the barons had been on the watch ; the whole Marches were on flame ; civil war was again on foot. The Earls of Lancaster and Hereford flew to arms. Audely, the two Rogers de Mortimer, Roger de Clifford, and many others, disgusted for private reasons with the Despensers, joined them. The lords of the Marches sent a message to the king demanding the instant banishment or imprisonment of the young favourite, threatening to renounce their allegiance, and to punish the minister themselves. Edward forbade them to commit any breach of the peace, and commanded their leader, the Earl of Hereford, to attend the council. But Hereford required that young Despenser should be previously committed to the custody of the Earl of Lancaster till the next parliament ; and on the king's refusal, placed himself at the head of the Marchers, who, with eight hundred men-at-arms, five hundred hobblers, and ten thousand footmen, entered the lands of the favourite, reduced his ten castles, murdered his servants, and burnt, destroyed, or carried off all the property on his twenty-three manors. Lancaster having joined them with thirty-four barons and a host of vassals, this formidable force marched to St. Albans. Having bound themselves not to lay down their arms till they had driven the two Despensers from the kingdom, they sent a united demand to the king for this object.

Edward assumed constitutional grounds for his objection to this demand. The two Despensers were absent—the father abroad, the son at sea, and the king declared that he was restrained by his coronation oath from violating the laws and condemning persons unheard. Timid at the head of an army, Edward was always bold in defence of his favourites. But these arguments weighed little with men with arms in their hands. They marched on London, cantoned themselves in the suburbs of Holborn and Clerkenwell, and at length proceeded to Westminster, filled the hall with armed men, and without informing the king of their intentions, ordered a paper to be read. It was an act of accusation against the Despensers, charging them with usurping the royal powers, of alienating the mind of the king from his nobles, of exacting fines, and appointing ignorant judges. By menaces and violence they carried their point, obtaining a sentence of attainder and perpetual banishment against the two obnoxious courtiers. Against this sentence the prelates protested in writing, but it was duly entered on the rolls, and a general pardon was granted to the earl and his associates for all trespasses committed in this matter, and having got this, they disbanded their army, and retired highly delighted with their success, and in perfect security, as they imagined, to their castles.

But the king, spiritless as he usually showed himself, deeply felt the indignity which had been offered to his authority, and two months did not elapse before he had the opportunity of revenging it. The force put upon the royal authority was so outrageous, and it reduced all respect for it to so low an ebb, that the barons and knights in their own neighbourhoods became totally regardless of public decorum towards the royal family. Even Queen Isabella, who had always endeavoured to live on good terms with the barons, and who detested the young Despenser as cordially as they did, could not escape insult. On her road to Canterbury, Isabella proposed to lodge during the night in the royal castle of Leeds, in Kent. The custody of this stronghold had been entrusted by Edward to the Lord Badlesmere, a man who had lately betrayed to the confederates the secrets

of his master, and by their means had obtained a special pardon for his transgressions. He was absent; but the Lady Badlesmere and her son refused the queen a lodging even for a single night; and some of her attendants insisting on their royal mistress being admitted to what might be called her own house, were forcibly repulsed and killed. Isabella, with all her quick sense of insult, complained loudly to the king; the yet chivalrous feelings of the age were aroused; and Edward thought that now he had a splendid opportunity of vengeance on his haughty barons. He forthwith showed resolution, and displayed a spirit which, if it had been permanent and uniform, would doubtless have made and kept him master of his throne and prerogatives. Badlesmere avowed the act of his wife, and the lords of the Marches advanced to his assistance; but Edward assembled an army, fell upon Badlesmere, took him prisoner in his castle, hanged Colepepper, the governor, and eleven of his knights, sent the others to different prisons, and confined in the Tower the Lady Badlesmere and her female attendants.

This act of vigour infused new life into the king's friends. Many came forward with the offer of their services, and the two Despensers successively returned to England. They had only been banished in the month of August,—in October they were again in their native land; and Edward, supported by the opinion of the prelates, gladly took the favourite and his father under the royal protection till a parliament should assemble to repeal the award enacted against them.

The king advancing in strength against the northern chieftains, they found themselves unable to withstand him. As Edward advanced, Lancaster retired into Yorkshire. At Boroughbridge he was encountered by a strong force under the governors of York and Carlisle, and there yielding, against his judgment, to the advice of the confederates, attempted a battle with the royal troops. Hereford determined to force the bridge. The lance of a crafty Welshman—who had discovered that the bridge was in a very decayed state and full of holes, and had concealed himself under it—thrust suddenly at a crevice on which

Hereford was standing, pierced the bowels of the brave earl, who fell dead on the spot. Lancaster expected the arrival of allies from Scotland—for there can be no doubt that at this period he and the Earl of Hereford were in alliance with Bruce—but no army came. Lancaster and ninety-five of the chief barons, bannerets, and knights were taken. On receiving a summons to yield, he retired into a neighbouring chapel, and there kneeling down, exclaimed, "Good Lord, I render myself to Thee, put me into Thy mercy." His royal lineage, even his near relationship to the king, was of no avail, not even to obtain him that respect at this period always conceded to prisoners of rank, he was treated as contemptuously as he had behaved to Gaveston. His captors conducted him to his own castle of Pontefract, at whose gates he had stood when Edward passed by on his return from the siege of Berwick, and jeered his king with bitter scorn. To that castle Edward now came a triumphant lord, and in his own hall was Lancaster, who at Warwick had adjudged Gaveston to die, arraigned as a traitor. Such lenity as forfeiture or exile recorded not with the policy or the resentment of Edward. He could not forget the blood of Gaveston, and the indignities which he had suffered in person, and experience had taught him that he must crush the presumption, or submit to be a puppet in the hands of his adversaries. Earl Thomas, as the head of the party, was selected for the first victim. Of his guilt there could be no doubt, he was told that it was useless to speak in his defence, and was condemned to be hanged, drawn, and beheaded. In consideration of his royal descent, Edward forgave the more ignominious part of the punishment, but the spectators and officers of justice displayed their loyalty by heaping all sorts of indignities upon him. His "cotte armure," with the proud quarterings of England and France, was stripped off—a Gascon threw an old hood over his head, and set him upon a sorry jade of a horse without a bridle, and thus he was led to execution. As he rode along, they pelted him with mud, assailed him with outcries and curses, and trunted him with the title of King Arthur, the name

he had assumed in his correspondence with the Scots. "King of Heaven," he cried, "grant me mercy, for the King of Earth has forsaken me!" On a mount just outside the town the unfortunate earl knelt down and was beheaded. There is nothing whatever in the public career of this nobleman which may not assume the character of patriotism, for he fell, as he had lived, in endeavouring to resist the mischievous practices of the king in regard to his favourites. As a prince of the blood, by his position and the rights of the charter, he was bound to support the constitution which the king was continually violating in his unbounded partiality to those parasites.

Besides the two leaders of this revolt, amongst those who were executed were Badlesmere, who had insulted the queen, with eighteen other noblemen and knights. Many were thrown into prison, and others escaped beyond the sea. But not only was this vengeance taken on the persons of the insurgents, but their estates were forfeited to the crown, and the people soon beheld with inexpressible indignation the greater portion of these immense demesnes seized upon by the younger Despenser, whose rapacity was insatiable. The elder Despenser, through the favour of his son, obtained grants probably still more extensive, and all the avenues to favour and promotion were stopped by this one family. Edward now created the elder Despenser Earl of Winchester and the younger Earl of Gloucester; but the rest of the barons of the royal party receiving little, were the more incensed at the immense spoils heaped on the Despensers. The king's enemies, on the other hand, vowed vengeance on both monarch and favourite, and the people regarded the latter with more determined envy and hatred than ever. Meanwhile the power and insolence of the Despensers increased; the insurgent nobles whose lives had not been forfeited were still kept in close prison; large confiscations of property continued; and the people openly complained that there were three kings instead of one. The younger Despenser rapidly regained his former ascendancy; but instead of profiting by the fate of Gaveston, he gloried to tread in the footsteps of

coast of England, to receive her letters and expresses more quickly.

One common principle animated the queen and the refugees of the Lancaster faction, and bound them together—hatred of the Despensers. Ostensibly she began to negotiate for a settlement of her royal husband's difficulties; but as the mode of solving them, she conceded that he should come over in person and do homage for his provinces. This proposal, which astonished both the king and the whole court, was strenuously resisted by the younger Despenser. He well knew the feelings entertained by the queen towards himself; and therefore would on no account trust himself in Paris with her. But to allow the king to proceed there alone was as full of danger. Edward might there fall under the influence of some other person; and at home his own position would be a most dangerous one during the king's absence, surrounded as he was by universal hatred.

Edward, however, began his journey to France to do homage at Beauvais, but having proceeded as far as Dover only, stopped, and—doubtless at the persuasion of the Despensers—on the plea of illness, declined to advance any further. Foiled in this scheme, Isabella hit upon another, which was that Edward should make over Guienne and Ponthieu to his son, who then could go instead of his father, and perform the requisite homage. This was more easily fallen into by the king, because it suited young Despenser by keeping the king at home. Edward therefore resigned Guienne and Ponthieu to his son, thirteen years old; who went over, did his homage, and took up his residence with his mother.

The plot now began to unfold itself palpably. The queen was not only surrounded by a powerful body of English subjects hostile to their king, but she had the heir to the throne in her possession, and she determined never to return to England till she could drive young Despenser thence, and seize the reins of power herself. When, therefore, the homage being completed, Edward urged the return of his wife and son, he received at first evasive answers, which

were soon followed by the foulest charges against him by his own queen. She complained that Hugh Despenser had alienated the king's affection from her; that he had sown continual discord between them; had brought the king to such a feeling against her, that he would neither see her nor come where she was. She accused the Despensers of seizing her dower, and keeping her in a state of abject poverty and dependence, and that, beyond all this, they had a design on the lives of both herself and son. The king put forth a defence of himself; but nothing could clear him from the charge of having grossly neglected the queen for his favourites, or of having most thoroughly merited her contempt and aversion.

. But while Isabella was doing the utmost to disgrace and ruin her husband, her own conduct was notoriously scandalous. During the life of the Earl of Lancaster, she appears to have leaned very much on him for counsel and support; but now on the Lord Mortimer; who, since his arrival in Paris, had become the chief officer of her household, and being looked upon as the head of the Lancastrian party, was therefore necessarily thrown by his duties much into her society. Mortimer was handsome, brave, of insinuating address, and sufficiently unprincipled. Their intimacy speedily ripened into intrigue and criminality. Very soon the position of the queen and Mortimer became universally known. They lived in the most avowed intimacy, and when Edward, made aware of it, insisted on Isabella's and young Edward's immediate return, she declared boldly that she would never set foot in England till Despenser was for ever removed from the royal presence and councils. This public avowal won her instant and great popularity in England, where the favourite was hated, and threw for awhile a slight veil over her own designs. An active correspondence was opened with the discontented barons in England; the vilest calumnies were propagated everywhere against the king, and this disgraceful family quarrel became the common topic of all Europe.

After the lapse of more than five centuries, the private

remonstrances of the husband and father are still preserved in several letters in the French language, which are exceedingly curious. The Archbishop of Canterbury had written to Isabella to exhort her to return, to which she had replied that Sir Hugh le Despenser was her enemy, and that she could not come because her life was in danger. On the 1st of December, 1325, the king thus writes to the queen.—“ Dame, oftentimes we have commanded you, as well before the homage as since, to return to us with all haste, without any excuses Now, you have sent us word, by the honourable father the Bishop of Winchester, that you will not come, on account of the danger and doubt of Hugh le Despenser; at which we greatly marvel the more so, that you bore yourself so amicably towards him, and he towards you, in our presence, and even at your departure you gave him special promises, signs, and proofs of certain friendship, and afterwards sent him very especial letters, which he has shown to us.” The royal husband then goes on to say that no evil or disgrace has ever befallen her, except when “ we have spoken to you, as we ought, words of chastisement in secret, without any other severity.” To his son he writes, under date of the 2nd of December.—“ Most dear son, remember in your youth and tender age what we charged and commanded you when you left us at Dover, and what you said to us in answer, with which we were greatly pleased, and do not trespass or contravene what we then charged you in any point, on no account. And since your homage has been received, go to our most dear brother the King of France, your uncle, and take your leave of him, and then come away to us in the company of our most dear companion the queen, your mother, if she come so soon. And if she does not come, come you, in all haste without longer stay, for we have a very great desire to see you and speak with you. And hereof fail not by any means, neither for mother nor for any other person, as you regard our blessing.” But still the wife came not, nor the son. On the 1st of March, 1326, the king again writes to the young Edward, commanding him to contract no marriage without

his father's consent; defending Hugh le Despenser as his dear and loyal servant; bitterly adverting to the alliance of Queen Isabella with Roger Mortimer—a false traitor, and the king's mortal enemy; and ordering his son immediately to return. In a letter to the King of France, of the same date, Edward says that he truly perceives, as all men may perceive, that the queen does not love him as she ought to love her lord.

Charles *le Bel*, from motives of policy, declared himself highly incensed against Edward for his treatment of his sister, and even threatened to redress her wrongs. He still protected her, even after her open connexion with Mortimer; though both himself and his two brothers had thrown their wives into prison for irregularity of conduct, where the wife of his brother had been strangled. But though Charles probably never seriously intended to take any active measures on behalf of Isabella, Edward was greatly alarmed, and not only sent, in the name of Despenser, rich presents to the French king and his ministers, but also wrote to the Pope, earnestly imploring him to command Charles to restore to him his wife and son. This letter to the Pope was strongly backed, according to Froissart, “by much gold and silver to several cardinals and prelates nearest to the holy father.” The interference of his holiness afforded a sufficient plea for Charles to withdraw all countenance from Isabella, and even to command her to quit the kingdom.

The situation of Isabella at this time was very trying; according to the Monk of Malmesbury, “the king, by counsel of the two Despensers, outlawed and publicly banished, in the courts of London, his wife and his son, as traitors to the realm.” From henceforward reconciliation was at an end, and the sword alone could decide whether the land was yet to endure the domination of the king's favourites, or to welcome back his wife and son.

Charles *le Bel*, who seems to have allowed his natural feelings to be overcome by dread of the papal censures, sent a message to his sister, commanding her to depart; but he

had secretly prepared an asylum for her in the court of his vassal William Count of Holland and Hainault. Here all her plans were matured under the direction of her bold and astute favourite Mortimer. The partisanship of the count was of the most decided kind, and the queen, the more indissolubly to engage him in her enterprise, affianced her son Edward, the heir to the English throne, to Philippa, his second daughter. The brother of the count, John of Hainault, became a perfect enthusiast in the cause of Isabella, who, still young—only eight and twenty years of age—and eminently beautiful, seemed to inspire him with all the chivalrous devotion of the most romantic ages. He declared his full faith in Isabella's innocence of all impropriety, with the spectacle of her intimacy with Mortimer daily before his eyes, and he was deaf to all warnings of danger from jealousies of the English, who, he was assured, were especially disgusted by the interference of foreigners. When the dejected queen, on one occasion, made sore complaint of all her griefs, Sir John was so much distressed, Froissart tells us, that he mixed his tears with hers, and said, "Lady, see here your knight, who will not fail to die for you, though all else should desert you, therefore will I do everything to conduct you and your son, and to restore you to your rank in England, by the grace of God, and aid of your friends, and I, and all those whom I can urge, will peril our lives for your sake, and we will have armed force in plenty, if it please God, without fearing danger from the King of France." The queen, who was sitting down, and Sir John standing before her, rose, and would have cast herself at his feet, for thankfulness of his great favour, but the valiant Sir John caught her in his arms, and said, "God forbid that the Queen of England should ever do so! Madam, be of good cheer, for I will keep my promise to yourself and company." The queen answered, "Sir, I find in you more kindness and comfort than in all the world beside, and I give you five hundred thousand thanks for what you have said and offered. If you will keep what you have promised so courteously, I and my son shall be forever bound to you, and we will

put the kingdom of England under your management, as it ought to be."

A force of nearly three thousand men was placed at the disposal of Isabella, whom she paid out of the dowry of her son's affianced bride, the fair Philippa, and making the Count of Hainault and Mortimer its commanders, she with her son sailed adventurously to England, and landed about Michaelmas at Orwell, on the Suffolk coast, not as supplicants, but complainants in arms for the redress of injuries. Isabella came surrounded by nobles who had been banished, or had fled when the insurrection of Lancaster failed. Powerful lords, including the brothers of the king, the Earls of Kent and Suffolk; his cousin the Earl of Richmond; the Earl of Leicester, the brother and heir of Earl Thomas of Lancaster, and several bishops joined Isabella. A proclamation was issued, stating that the queen, the prince, and the Earl of Kent had come to free the nation from the tyranny of Hugh le Despenser. The king and his favourites in this important hour of trial found no friends. The barons, who thought themselves secure from forfeiture in coalition with the prince, made a reconciliation with the barons of the Lancastrian faction, and the people poured in on all sides. Never was a miserable monarch so deserted by his people and by his own blood. Edward having appealed in vain to the citizens of London to maintain the royal cause, issued a proclamation offering a thousand pounds (a sum equal to ten thousand at the present day) to any one for the head of Mortimer, and then fled with the two Despensers from his capital. The populace rose, and murdered the Bishop of Exeter—who had been sent by the king as envoy to France to induce the queen and her son to return—and threw his body into the Thames. They met with and killed a friend of the favourite, one John le Marshal. They made themselves masters of the Tower, and liberated all the state prisoners—a numerous body, most of them suffering from the attempts to put down young Despenser; and they entered into an association to put to death without mercy every one who dared to oppose the queen and prince.

The king, attended by his favourites, flew to Bristol Castle as a refuge, closely pursued by the Earl of Kent and John de Hainault. Leaving the elder Despenser to defend the fortress of that city, Edward proceeded with the younger Despenser to the marches of Wales, and finding the people there little inclined to arm in his favour, he put to sea with his favourite, hoping to reach the fertile and well stored Isle of Lundy, at the mouth of the Bristol Channel, where a defensive station might be made from its impregnable position. But "the stars fought in their courses against Sisera," adverse winds precluded approach, and the king, driven by a tempest to the coast of Glamorgan, at last sought shelter in the abbey of Neath. The queen with her forces soon reached Bristol. The garrison mutinied against the elder Despenser, and he surrendered town and castle on the third day. He was brought before Sir William Trussel, —one of the Lancastrian exiles, raised by Isabella to the office of judge—and like Lancaster was condemned to death without being allowed to utter a word in his defence. Isabella gratified her cruel revenge by his torture and death. The venerable old man of more than ninety years was forthwith dragged to execution, they tore out his entrails, and thus eviscerated while alive, hanged him on a gibbet for four days, then cut his body into pieces and threw it to the dogs, and as he had been made Earl of Winchester, his head was sent to that city and stuck on a pole. The chief offence of this aged nobleman was his eager rapacity in grasping the honours and estates of others. Such was the fate of one who had borne a high character through a long life, till strange fortune lifted him aloft and developed in him the lurking demons of avarice and lust of his neighbours' goods, ending thus direfully.

Edward concealed himself for some weeks in the mountains about Neath Abbey, and the Welsh, equally indifferent to the distress of their lord and of their sovereign, if they did not actually betray *him*, sold his favourite and his chancellor Baldoc for a price. Corrupting the fidelity of the natives, Henry Earl of Leicester—who had lately taken the

title of his attainted brother, Thomas of Lancaster, put to death at Pontefract—got possession of Despenser and Baldoc, who were secreted in the woods of Lantressan. The king, helpless and hopeless, then immediately came forth and voluntarily surrendered to his cousin, by whom he was sent to the strong fortress of Kenilworth. *His* fate was postponed to answer the purposes of his relentless wife; the other captives were sacrificed without mercy to the resentment of their enemies. Short and bloody work was made with the favourite. The younger Despenser found his doom at Hereford, where the queen then held her court; he was sentenced by the same judge whose hands were still reeking with the blood of his father. The offences laid to his charge form the best proof of his innocence. According to the savage Trussel—whose grounds for condemning him were scarcely more legal and rational than those urged against his father—he had been the cause of every calamity which had befallen the kingdom since his return from banishment, even of the failure of the king's expedition into Scotland. He had constantly fomented the dissensions between Edward and his consort; had hired assassins to murder the queen and the prince when they were in France; and at their return had conveyed away the king and the royal treasures, against the provisions of the great charter. "Therefore," said that upright judge, "do all the good men of this realm, lesser and greater, poor and rich, award with common assent that you, Hugh le Despenser, as a robber, traitor, and outlaw, be drawn, hanged, embowelled, beheaded, and quartered. Away then, traitor; go, receive the reward of your tyranny, wicked and attainted traitor!" The sentence was carried out with revolting minuteness. He was drawn in a black gown with the arms of his family reversed, and a "chaplet of poignant nettles" on his head, and "this writing set on his breast in great letters, *Quid gloriaris in malitiâ? Qui potens est in iniquitate?*" He was hanged on a gallows fifty feet high, amidst the acclamations and scoffs of the people. His servant, Simon de Reading, a faithful follower who had always adhered to the fortunes of his master, was also hanged

on the same gibbet, only a few yards lower. Besides these, the Earl of Arundel and two other noblemen were beheaded. Their chief crime, it was generally thought, was the contiguity of their possessions to those of the queen's favourite, to whom they were granted. Baldoc, as an ecclesiastic, was exempt from the gallows, but being sent to the Bishop of Hereford's palace in London, he was there seized by the enraged populace, and, though rescued, died soon after in Newgate of his injuries. So terminated the fortunes of Edward of Caernarvon's favourites and few adherents. His own fate, steeped in still deeper horrors, was fast hastening on.

Isabella, with Mortimer and her son, proceeded by slow journeys to Westminster to summon a parliament—as they called it. This formal farce was summoned and enacted in the king's name to condemn the king himself. The first scene was opened by that crafty politician Adam Orleton, Bishop of Hereford, with a long speech.

The removal of the Despensers from the person of the king, the only ostensible object of the party in arms, had now been effected, and it was natural to ask why Edward, in whose name the parliament had been summoned, was not restored to the exercise of the royal authority. To obviate this difficulty, Orleton painted in strong colours the vindictive disposition which it suited him to ascribe to the captive monarch, and solemnly declared that to liberate him now would be to expose to certain death the princess, who by her wisdom and courage had so lately freed the realm from the tyranny of the royal favourites. He had spread everywhere with indefatigable activity the filth of the court scandal respecting Edward, and this might have passed for religious zeal in one of his profession and rank in the church had he not winked as resolutely at the notorious vice of the queen. He now put the formal question whether the king should be restored, or his son at once raised to the throne. Not a voice was raised in the king's favour. The young Edward was declared king by acclamation, and presented in that capacity to the approbation of the populace. Five days after, in presence of the young prince seated on the

throne, the charges against his father were read and approved: incapacity of government; waste of time in idle amusements; neglect of business; cowardice; being perpetually under the influence of favourites; of having by imbecility lost Scotland and part of Guienne; with arbitrary and unconstitutional imprisonment, ruin and death of different nobles. In fact, the whole kingdom was weary of the incurable king. So it was resolved that the reign of Edward of Caernarvon had ceased, and that the sceptre should be entrusted to the hands of his son, Edward of Windsor.

Isabella affecting to believe that the parliament had exceeded its just powers, with the most violent expressions of grief lamented the misfortune of her husband, and a deputation was accordingly sent to Edward, at Kenilworth, to bring back his resignation of the crown. His mortal enemy Orleton and the savage Sir William Trussel were amongst its leading members. The king came out of his inner apartment into the great hall wrapped in a common black gown, but was so overcome by his feelings at the sight of Orleton, that he fell senseless on the floor. They raised him and brought him back to life and recollection; and the prelate of Hereford mentioned the purpose for which they attended, adding, that on his refusal to surrender the diadem to his son, they would choose another sovereign. The wretched Edward, with tears, expressed his grief that his people should be so exasperated against him as to be weary of his reign, but at last consented that his son should be substituted for himself. The distressing ceremony was closed by the act of Sir Thomas Blount, the steward of the household, who, as was always done at the king's death, broke his staff of office, and declared that all persons engaged in the royal service were discharged.

The extreme youth of the king enabled Queen Isabella his mother to have the chief power of the crown vested in her. A dower was assigned to her, so ample that scarcely one-third of the royal income was reserved for the new sovereign. But her unconcealed connexion with the Lord

Mortimer made her very soon lose the popularity which her pretence of driving away the Despensers had obtained her. Both barons and people looked with ill suppressed jealousy and disgust at the dangerous position of Mortimer, and however completely the late king had forfeited public favour, it was not long before the people began to feel that it was not the part of a wife to have invaded the kingdom, and deposed and pursued to death her husband and the father of her children.

But Edward of Caernarvon was destined to add one more to the long list of princes to whom the loss of a crown has been but the prelude to the loss of life. The solicitude of the Earl of Lancaster to alleviate the sufferings of his captive did not accord with the views of the queen and her favourite. True, Isabella had pretended to lament over the necessity, and to bewail the afflictions of her husband, but her actions had belied her words and tears, for she had still pressed on his abdication, and was all the time living in the most open adultery with her paramour Mortimer. This scandalous connexion was publicly noticed by the clergy in their sermons, and there was reason to fear that the church might compel her by censures to cohabit with her consort. The wretched captive lamented bitterly that neither his wife nor children came near him. Isabella had not the courage to face the husband whom she had so cruelly injured, nor would trust her sons in the presence of their father. Though she had grasped the sovereign power, she felt that she could not long hope to retain it, and this conviction harassed her with the most gloomy apprehensions.

The people of England had been excited to an outburst of violent rage against the weak, misguided monarch Edward as a cruel and execrable tyrant, and into the highest admiration of the queen and Mortimer as "angels sent from heaven for their deliverance." But when the true character of these last, and the criminal nature of their union, came to be better known, the people began to open their eyes, to see that they had been deluded, and to pity the sufferings of their wretched sovereign.

From various parts of the kingdom tidings reached Isabella that confederacies were on foot for the avowed purpose of liberating the king. Alarmed therefore at the increasing sympathy manifested for her husband, and at her own fast-spreading unpopularity, she is charged with combining with the Bishop of Hereford to plan his destruction, and some plots being formed—not so much in favour of Edward as against Mortimer—hurried on a fearful tragedy. The deposed king was taken out of the hands of Lancaster, and placed under the charge of Sir John Maltravers, a man of savage disposition, and embittered against the royal captive by injuries received from him and his favourites. To conceal the place of Edward's whereabouts, he successively transferred him in the silence of night from Kenilworth to Corfe, Bristol and Berkeley castles, and by the atrocious indignities he heaped upon him, added to the severities inflicted, laboured to deprive him of his reason or to shorten his life. He was made to ride thinly clad and with uncovered head, that the severity of the season might affect him. His tormentors prevented him from sleeping when exhausted nature sunk into repose. They gave him unsuitable food, and contradicted all his wishes—that by watchings, by cold, and perpetual mortifications, they might hurry him to a premature grave.

Pursuing this crafty villany, whilst on the road to Berkeley they made him a crown of straw, and jeeringly saluted him with, "Fare forth, Sir King." To avoid meeting any of his friends, they turned towards the marshes on the Severn; and to hinder recognition, they resolved that his head and beard should be shaved. They stopped him on a small hillock for this purpose, and brought some dirty water out of a neighbouring ditch. The king, weeping profusely at the coarse indignity, said, with a smile of grief, "See, I have provided clean and warm water, whether you will or no."*

Secured at Berkeley, his "unrelenting" queen renewed

* Moor, the chronicler, says that he had this account, after the great pestilence, from William Bishop, one of the attendants of the king's tormentors.

her consultations with the prelate. Their scheme of mortifications, mental and corporeal, had altogether failed. But self-preservation was involved in the king's death, and his existence was contemplated with all the impatience of alarmed and conscious guilt. While Lord Berkeley sojourned at his fortress near the Severn, Edward was treated with the courtesy due to his rank and to his misfortunes: but that nobleman being reproached for treating the royal prisoner too courteously, quitted the place in disgust, and the opportunity was taken to leave him in the hands of two most hardened and desperate ruffians, "Gournay and Ogle—hell-hounds that were capable of more villanous despatch than became either knights or the lowliest varlets in the world." As Orleton knew that, remorseless as these men were, they dared not proceed to the last violence without a written authority, he sent them an ambiguously worded order, which they interpreted as he wished.*

These traitors found that the modes of killing hitherto resorted to were too slow for those who wanted to be secure from any popular revulsion of feeling in favour of the deposed monarch. They therefore shut their sovereign up in a loathsome chamber, hoping that the fetid exhalations would destroy him; but the king, reaching a window, cried out to some carpenters who were working on one side. The wretches, perceiving that nothing but actual murder would avail, rushed upon him one dark night in September, as he was sleeping in his bed, and holding him down with a table, they thrust a red-hot plumber's iron into his bowels, through a horn, that no external mark of violence might be seen on his person. Next morning the gates were thrown open, and the people were freely admitted to see the body of the late king, who, it was said, had died suddenly in the night. Of the nature of that death there was no doubt in the mind of any one, for belated wayfarers and even some dwellers in the town had heard the death-shrieks of the "agonised king,"

* Moor, 603. "*Edwardum occidere nolle timere bonum est.*" This may be either construed, "Fear not to kill Edward—it is a good thing;" or, "Do not kill Edward—it is good to fear it."

his "wailful noise" waking up, says Holinshed, "numbers who prayed heartily to God to receive his soul, for they understood by those cries what the matter meant." Many nobles and gentlemen went to see the body next day. Externally it exhibited no marks of violence; but the distortion of the features betrayed the dreadful agonies in which he had expired. It was then privately conveyed to Gloucester and buried in the abbey, without any inquiry or investigation whatever. The murderers fled to the Continent on the perpetration of their horrible enormity. There is a record of Berkeley* having cleared himself, he having been afflicted with a severe malady at the time, and detained from the castle at his manor of Bradley; but Maltravers, Gournay, and Ogle were held in universal detestation.

The Earl of Leicester—who had succeeded to the title of Lancaster, and who had been foremost in resisting the tyrannical measures of the preceding reign—was chosen guardian and protector of the young Edward of Windsor, now fourteen: but the queen-mother and Mortimer divided between them the real power of the state. A peace being

* Berkeley Castle is situated on the south-east side of the town so named. The date of this stronghold is not ascertained, but its antiquity is evident by a grant of the building, by Henry II., to Robert Fitz-Hardinge, with power to strengthen and enlarge it. The castle was first inhabited by Maurice, the son of Robert, and he assumed the name of the place. This edifice is in complete repair, and is a most perfect example of castellated building. It is an irregular pile, consisting of a keep and various embattled appurtenances, which surround a court of about 140 yards in circumference, the chief feature being the baronial hall—a noble apartment in fine preservation—adjoining to which is the chapel. Access to an outer court is obtained by a machicolated gatehouse. The keep is nearly circular, having one square tower and three semicircular towers: that on the north, which is the loftiest part of the castle, was rebuilt in the reign of Edward II., and is called Thorpe's Tower, from a family of that name holding their manor by the tenure of *castle guard*, it being their duty to keep this tower when required. On the right of the great staircase leading to the keep, approached by a gallery, is the room in which, it is said, Edward II. was cruelly murdered. It is a small and gloomy apartment, which, till within the last century, was only lighted by *flèches*. After his decease his heart was inclosed in a silver casket, and the Berkeley family formed part of the procession which attended the body to Gloucester, where it was interred in the cathedral. The king's heart was afterwards entombed in the church of the Grey Friars, London, and placed on the breast of Queen Isabella, the instigator of his atrocious murder—that "She-wolf of France," who, "with unrelenting fangs, had torn the bowels of her mangled mate."

concluded with Scotland at the instigation of the queen's favourite, though obviously to the advantage of both countries, was extremely unpopular, and created a general feeling of disgust against Mortimer, who was accused of having betrayed the interests of the English crown. The fall of Isabella's minion was at hand, though for a time he contrived to divert the public wrath by means of a pretended conspiracy.

Edmund Woodstock, Earl of Kent, says a recent historian, "was now made to pay an awful price for his levity in joining and then deserting Lancaster." He was surrounded by the artful agents of Mortimer and the queen, and led to believe a story which was then widely circulated, that his brother Edward II, in whose deposition he had taken so active a part, was not dead, but living a captive in Conisburgh Castle. Some monks urged the Earl of Kent to release his brother and restore him to his throne, assuring him that several bishops and nobles, whose messengers they were or pretended to be, would aid him in this meritorious enterprise. The earl even received letters from the Pope exhorting him to pursue the same course. These letters appear to have been forgeries, but they imposed upon the credulous earl, who even went the length of writing to his dead brother, which letters were delivered to Sir John Maltavers, one of the suspected assassins of the late king. These strange epistles were put into the hands of Isabella and Mortimer, who, affecting to consider them proof sufficient of treasonable practices, immediately summoned a parliament to try the traitor. On the 16th of March this subservient parliament convicted the earl of high treason, "for having designed to raise a dead man to the throne,—at least nothing else was proved or attempted to be proved against him, and thus this trial" (says the writer whose account we have followed) "is entitled to a place among the curiosities of jurisprudence." This conspiracy, as it was called by its treacherous designers, was no sooner formed than discovered in order to effect the destruction of the young king's uncle, who proved an obstacle to the designs and power of the queen and Mortimer. This victim to the machinations of

the infamous queen-mother was Edmund, youngest son of Edward I. by his second wife Marguerite of France—a most amiable and exemplary prince—who at the age of twenty-nine was thus impeached by a subservient parliament of high treason, and on Sunday, March 13th, 1330, condemned by Queen Isabella and her paramour to die on the morrow. Every effort of the “young lion” of England proved fruitless to save the life of his uncle. So beloved and popular was the Earl of Kent that no Englishman could be found to execute the sentence. The chronicler Leland says that the executioner stole away, and that this unfortunate prince of the blood sat waiting on the scaffold until five o’clock in the afternoon to be launched into eternity. The wretch who was at length persuaded to strike off his head was a condemned criminal in the Marshalsea prison, who accepted the terrible office as the ransom of his own life. He was beheaded March 19th, 1329. All his accomplices were liberated except Robert de Taunton and the friar who told the earl that he had raised a spirit in order to be more fully assured of the king’s being alive. This latter confederate was kept in prison till he died.

The honours and estates of the earl were apportioned to the family of the favourite, and the Earl of Lancaster, on pretence also of having assented to the conspiracy, was soon after thrown into prison, and many of the prelates and nobility were prosecuted. Such was Mortimer’s design, carried out without the slightest remorse, by which he sought to crush his enemies one after another, and enrich himself and his family by the forfeitures. He next assumed the title of Earl of March, and with it a state and dignity equal or superior to the royal. His power and tyranny became formidable to every one; and all parties, forgetting past animosities, united in their hatred of Mortimer. The young king, who was not permitted to take any part in the government, beheld with grief and indignation these infamous transactions, and determined as soon as he attained his eighteenth year to throw off the restraint imposed on him by his mother and Mortimer.

About three months after the execution of the Earl of Kent, Philippa, the young queen, was delivered at Woodstock of her first child, the Prince Edward, afterwards so celebrated as the *Black Prince*. A father, and eighteen years of age, the king now thought it time to assert his authority, and the nation was most willing to assist him in overthrowing the usurpation of his mother and her lover. At first, however, no person about the court was bold enough to declare himself, and when Edward opened his mind to the Lord Montacute, it was with the most circumspect secrecy, and the first steps taken in conjunction with this prudent nobleman were cautious in the extreme. In the month of October the parliament met at Nottingham. Edward with his mother and Mortimer were lodged in the castle, the bishops and barons took up their quarters in the neighbourhood. On the morning of the 19th, Edward had a private conference with the Lord Montacute, who immediately after was seen to ride away into the country with many friends and attendants. In the afternoon Mortimer appeared before the council with a troubled countenance. This was a nervous moment for the young king. Mortimer proclaimed to the members of the council that a base attempt was making against him and the queen mother, and that Edward himself was privy to the conspiracy. Edward denied the charge, but the favourite treated him as a liar. At the dead of night the Lord Montacute and his associates returned quietly to Nottingham. The stronghold was not a place to be taken by assault or surprise. A proper military guard was kept, and the keys of the great gates were carried every evening to Isabella, who had them laid by her bedside. But the conspirators had taken measures to defeat all these precautions. Montacute had won over the governor of the castle, who had agreed to admit them through a secret subterraneous passage, the outlet of which, concealed by brambles and rubbish, opened at the foot of the castle hill. It was near the hour of midnight that Montacute and his friends crawled through the dismal passage. When within the castle walls, and at the foot of the main tower, they

were joined by Edward, who led them up a staircase into a dark apartment. Here they heard voices proceeding from a hall which adjoined the queen-mother's chamber; they were the voices of Mortimer, the Bishop of Lincoln, and other adherents, who were sitting in late and anxious consultation. The intruders burst open the door, killing two knights who tried to defend the entrance. The guilty Isabella rushed from her bed, and in tears and in an agony of grief implored her "sweet son" to spare her "gentle Mortimer." The favourite was not slaughtered there, but was dragged out of the castle and committed to safe custody. On the following morning, Edward issued a proclamation informing his lieges that he had now taken the government into his own hands, and he summoned a new parliament to meet at Westminster on the 20th of November.

Before this parliament the fallen favourite was arraigned. The prime charges against him were—his having procured the death of the late king and the judicial murder of the Earl of Kent; his having "accrouched" or usurped the power which lawfully belonged to the council of regency, and appropriated to himself the king's moneys, especially the twenty thousand marks recently paid by the King of Scots. His peers found all these articles of impeachment to be "notoriously true, and known to them and all people;" and they sentenced him to be drawn and hanged.

Edward, who was present in court during the trial, then requested them to judge Mortimer's confederates, but this they would not do until they had protested in form that they were not bound to sit in judgment on any others than men who were peers of the realm, like themselves. Sir Simon Bereford, Sir John Maltravers, John Deverel, and Boeges de Bayonne were condemned to death as accomplices, but three of these individuals had escaped. Mortimer was accompanied to the gallows only by Bereford. They were hanged at "The Elms," Tyburn, on the 29th of November. The queen-mother was deprived of her enormous jointure, and, on account of her high rank, was permitted to retire to her castle or manor-house at Risings, near King's

Lynn, where she passed the remaining twenty-seven years of her life in obscurity, not being allowed to attend the court

In this same parliament a price was set upon the heads of Gournay and Ogle, the reputed murderers of the late king Gournay was arrested in Spain, and delivered over to an English officer, who, obeying secret instructions, cut off his head at sea. From this and other circumstances it has been imagined that there were persons who still retained their influence at court, to whom silence upon all that regarded this horrible subject was particularly convenient. What became of Ogle does not appear. Sir John Maltravers was taken and executed, but on a different charge, namely, for having aided Mortimer in misleading the Earl of Kent. The Lord Berkeley, in whose castle the deed had been done, demanded a trial, and was fully acquitted.

Such, among the rest, were the fatal results of the infatuated favouritism of Edward of Caernarvon—the first King of England who was deposed and murdered. A terrible lesson alike to capricious, weak minded monarchs and arrogant, rapacious royal favourites! “Weep for the dead, for he hath lost the light, and weep for the fool, for he wanteth understanding, make little weeping for the dead, for he is at rest, but the life of the fool is worse than death.”



CHAPTER II.

MARIA DE PADILLA, FAVOURITE OF DON PEDRO THE CRUEL.

RESULTS OF FAVOURITISM IN THE COURTS OF ALFONSO XI.
AND DON PEDRO—THE KING'S MINISTER AND THE KING'S
FAVOURITE—THE OLD MINISTER OUTWITTED BY THE BOY
PRINCES—MARRIAGE OF DON PEDRO WITH BLANCHE OF
BOURBON—THE FALL OF ALBUQUERQUE—THE HAROUN AL
RASCHID OF SEVILLE—CIVIL WAR—CAPTIVITY OF DON PEDRO
—COALITION BETWEEN THE BASTARD PRINCES AND ALBU-
QUERQUE—DEATH OF ALBUQUERQUE—TREACHERY OF THE
QUEEN-MOTHER—CAPTIVITY OF DON PEDRO—ESCAPE OF DON
PEDRO—DON PEDRO REGAINS HIS AUTHORITY—THE MAS-
SACRE AT TÓRO—DOÑA ALDONZA AND DOÑA M. CORONEL
—DON PEDRO'S REVENGE—THE DEATH OF QUEEN BLANCHE
—THE DEATH OF MARIA DE PADILLA, AND MURDER OF DON
PEDRO.

I.

RESULTS OF FAVOURITISM IN THE COURTS OF ALFONSO XI.
AND DON PEDRO.

WHEN the young Don Pedro—unenviably distinguished in history by the epithet of *the Cruel*—ascended the throne of Castile in 1350, at little more than fifteen years of age, the Iberian peninsula comprehended five kingdoms—Castile, Aragon, Navarre, Portugal, and Grenada. The royal authority of Castile, the most puissant of the five, was tempered in the first instance by the power of the great vassals or *rich men* (*ricos hombres*),* including the masters of the military

* “Rico ombria was equivalent,” writes Mr. Ford in the *Quarterly Review*,

and religious orders, and then by that of the corporate towns (*concejos*). The kings, menaced by the turbulent feudalism of the *ricos hombres*, found it to be their policy to conciliate the commons, sometimes refractory, but almost always faithful. This ordinary state of things in Castile, which of itself involved numerous elements of disquietude, was further complicated by the anomalous position in which the different members of the royal family of Alfonso XI. stood towards each other. Don Pedro, the son of Alfonso "the valiant and just" and Maria of Portugal, was born at Burgos, 30th of August, 1333. His chivalrous father having strengthened the royal authority in Castile, and obtained very decisive advantages over the Moors of Grenada, died of the *black plague* in his camp before Gibraltar, when on the very point of wresting that stronghold from the grasp of his swarthy foes. His union with Doña Maria, prompted by policy alone, had not been a happy one. Scarcely had the Infanta of Portugal presented him with an heir, than he forsook her and attached himself to Doña Leonor de Guzman, a young widow belonging to an illustrious family in Seville, by whom he had ten children, nine sons and one daughter, all of whom were the objects of his predilection, and richly appanaged. Of the two eldest, the one, Henry, Conde de Trastamara, the other, Don Fadrique, grand-master of the order of St. Jago, had followed their father to the siege of Gibraltar, whilst Don Pedro, the legitimate heir to the throne, was left disregarded at Seville, beside the forsaken queen, who taught him as a first lesson in family dissension to hate the preferred children of

'to grandeeship, in which it has long since merged. The title in no wise depended upon wealth, though the sound has misled Ducange. The position of the *P* determines the signification: there is as much difference between a *rico hombre* and a *hombre rico*, as between a *sage femme* and a *femme sage*. Also the Wise defined the qualifications to be 'good birth, known character, and a valiant defender of the king.' *Ric* was the German *reche*, which occurs in the sense of champion in the 'Nibelungen Lied'. The satrapæ of the Sal-Goths were termed 'richer landur'. In the early stages of civilization, power and wealth became convertible terms, and hence the secondary meaning of *reche* attached to the original *rik*. *Pik* is to be traced in the termination of genuine Gotho-Spanish names, as *Manrique*, *Fernique*—sometimes in the prefix, as in *Picalla*, *Eccardus*, the Gothic *Pichard*."

Leonor de Guzman. Far from the "pride, pomp, circumstance of glorious war," a daily witness of humiliations heaped upon his mother by his father's favourite—Alfonso's confidant in all his projects—the young prince might have been taken for the son of an Eastern despot, fated to waste away his youth within the precincts of a gilded prison. And whilst thus pining in the cold shade of his father's neglect, he saw his two bastard brothers arrayed in glittering mail, attended by waving banners, and followed by hosts of men-at-arms, ride forth to share the perils and glories of war, whilst he remained idle amidst a deserted court, to mourn over his own and his mother's injuries.

The impressions of youth are deep and abiding. The first inimical sentiments awakened in the breast of Don Pedro were those of jealousy and hatred. Fostered in those sentiments by an insulted and weak-minded woman, he first learned to dissimulate, and next to form projects of revenge.

By her strength of intellect and decision of character, the king's favourite, Doña Leonor, showed herself not unworthy of her lofty position; and Alfonso perhaps owed to her wise counsels some portion of his success. She appeared with him in public; it was in her presence that the officers of justice and chief magistrates despatched their business; it was to her they were accountable during the king's absence. "She presented her hand to be kissed," says a chronicler, "as if she had been a *senora propietaria* of the kingdom of Castile."* She had taken care to surround herself with her relations and friends, and the principal offices of state were in their hands. She had obtained the grant of an immense domain, many a castellated fortress, and numerous vassals. After the death of her brother, Don Mendez, Master of St. Jago, she retained the seal of the order, and transacted all matters connected with it herself; and as Perez Ponce, one of her relatives, was Master of Alcantara, she had thus two petty armies always at her command.

* Duarte Nuñez do Liao, tom. ii. p. 95.

The death of King Alfonso produced an abrupt change in the court of Castile. All Spain was struck with dismay. All parties now united against the favourite and her family, she was menaced with a reverse of fortune as terrible as it was sudden. Hardly had Alfonso breathed his last sigh, than Doña Leonor, who had probably followed him to the camp before Gibraltar, thought it advisable to fly the vengeance of the queen mother. Under the advice of the Lord of Lara, to provide at once for her personal safety, Leonor immediately retired to one of those fortified strongholds she had obtained of the late king, the castle of Medina Sidonia*.

Shut up in that fortress, the royal favourite could descry from the summit of one of its lofty towers the melancholy procession which was bringing the body of Don Alfonso from Gibraltar to Seville, as it entered the lower town. The unhappy lady could now clearly perceive the change that a single day had made in her fortunes. The castellan of Medina Sidonia, Alonso Fernandez Coronel—who, to use the expression peculiar to the middle ages, *held* the fortress for Doña Leonor, his relative—requested, or rather summoned her to accept the renunciation of the homage which he owed her as the *senora proprietaria* of that place. This was plainly announcing to her that her cause was desperate, for Coronel, besides being attached to the Lara faction, was a gallant knight renowned for his prowess and loyalty. Leonor vainly endeavoured to retain him in her service, and what was still more strange, amongst so many ricos hombres and knights who during Alfonso's lifetime had vied with each other in protesting their entire devotion to her, not one was found who would accept the command of her castle. Moreover, the most alarming intelligence was brought to her from all quarters. Albuquerque had just arrested her two sons, Don Enrique and Don Fadrique,

* Medina Sidonia (the city of Seion) gives the ducal title to the descendants of Guzman el Bueno Alcaide of Tarifa. Leonor the mistress of Alfonso XI and Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II of England were descended from this renowned chieftain.

apparently intending to sacrifice them to the hatred of Maria, the queen-mother. Some of the favourite's enemies even accused her of conspiring against the new king, and of claiming the crown for her eldest son, by virtue of a pretended marriage with Don Alfonso.

Doña Leonor, terrified by this sudden and entire desertion, and trembling for her children, offered to deliver her castle up to Albuquerque, requesting only, as the price of her submission, a safeguard to Seville. This was readily granted, and, according to her desire, the Lord of Lara guaranteed that it should be respected. By thus humbling herself, she perhaps hoped to conciliate her ancient rival, or more probably she wished to secure the sums of money and the rich jewellery she had received from Don Alfonso, and which had been deposited at Seville. Her sons, who had accompanied the funeral procession as far as Medina Sidonia, were seized with sudden terror, and secretly quitting the army, attended only by a few devoted followers, hastened, without waiting their mother's concurrence, to take refuge in the castle of Moron, which belonged to their relative Perez Ponce, Master of Alcantara. Thence, after a short deliberation, Don Enrique hurriedly repaired to Algeziras, where the Lord of Marchena, Pero Ponce, brother to the Master of Alcantara, was governor, while at the same time Don Fadrique set out for Montanches, a fortress belonging to the order of St. Jago, and in his character of Master ordered the gates to be opened. Alvar de Guzman, a cousin of Leonor, shut himself up in Olvera, and Perez Ponce assembled his knights and vassals at Moron, there to devise some plan of action, or sustain a siege. All the relatives of the favourite hastened to fortify their castles, to summon their men-at-arms, and prepare as best they could for a civil war. On the other hand, Albuquerque and Queen Maria, after having celebrated the obsequies of Don Alfonso, proclaimed Don Pedro King of Castile, and hastened to arrange his household and fill up the vacant offices.

Pedro, although legally of an age to govern, was yet too young to exercise power. His entire authority therefore

fell into the hands of his mother and that of Don Juan Alonso Albuquerque, his father's chancellor and prime minister. The first three years of Pedro's reign were really the reign of Albuquerque. The favourite and her two eldest sons were forced to throw themselves upon the mercy of the young monarch and his mother, and thus were the usual elements of discord complicated by the temporary subversion of the power of Doña Leonor and her sons—though susceptible as that power was of recovering its ascendancy at any moment—and by the eventual pretensions of Don Fernando, Infante* of Aragon, nephew of Alfonso XI, and of Don Juan Nuñez de Lara, who by birth had claims to the throne, less immediate, but more legitimate.

A natural death rid the minister of Nuñez de Lara, who probably fell a victim to the terrible epidemic which then raged in the peninsula, and the sword and dagger cut short the lives of that powerful noble's principal adherents, Garcia Lasso, Adelantado† of Castile, and Don Alonso Coronel, who had placed himself at the head of the Lord of Lara's partisans in Andalusia, and even in Seville, and avowedly recruited an army for him. Albuquerque thus freed from Don Juan Nuñez, and having the Infante of Aragon and Queen Maria under his control, might henceforth imagine himself sole master of Castile. The young king took no part in the government. He evinced no interest in any other occupation than the chase, and passed whole days on horseback with his hawks and hounds, as reckless of the good as of the evil which his ministers might commit in his name. No one yet understood his character, nor probably did he understand it himself. He had been brought up in seclusion, more like a Moorish than a Christian prince, had betrayed no exclusive passion, no decided taste, except that for

* The title Infante (*infan* one) reserved for the younger branches of the royal family was formerly analogous in meaning to the old English word 'Cicill' as a synonyme with 'halgo.' The names of the Infantes of Lara and the Infantes of Carrion suffice to prove the importance and antiquity of the term; whilst the use of 'the Infanta,' the 'Infanta Cecilia,' and several others might be adduced as showing how early it became appropriated to personages of royal blood.

† A governor, uniting civil and military authority.

violent exercise, which is usual at his age, for he was scarcely sixteen.

Leaving Seville at the commencement of the spring of 1351, with Albuquerque, in order to preside over the Cortes, convoked at Valladolid, the king first directed his steps towards Estremadura, for the purpose of receiving homage from his brother, Don Fadrique, who had not yet appeared at court, although he had sent in his allegiance at the same time that Enrique had solicited pardon in person. The interview took place at Llerena, one of the principal commanderies of St. Jago, where the knights, apprised of the royal intentions beforehand, had assembled in great numbers from all parts of the kingdom. The Master welcomed his brother with the greatest demonstrations of respect, and offered him that magnificent hospitality which might be expected from the powerful order of which he was chief. Don Pedro, or rather Albuquerque in his name, after having assured Don Fadrique of his complete restoration to favour, dispensed with his presence at the approaching Cortes.

Queen Maria had accompanied the king on this journey, dragging in her train the unfortunate Doña Leonor. Her son Don Fadrique requested and obtained permission to see her. In the presence of the jailors, mother and son, both fallen from their high estate, threw themselves into each other's arms; and during the hour they were permitted to pass together, wept without uttering a word. Presently a page came to announce to Don Fadrique that the king expected him. After one last embrace he quitted his mother, never to see her more.* The fate of this unhappy woman had been decided. From Llerena, by order of Albuquerque, she was removed to the castle of Talavera, which belonged to the queen-mother, and was held by Gutier Fernandez of Toledo, one of her liegemen. There, Leonor did not long languish. A few days after her arrival, a secretary of the queen brought the governor her death-warrant. The execution took place privately, and there is no evidence that Don Pedro was acquainted with it. Doubtless the queen

* Ayala, p. 35.

had exacted from Albuquerque the sacrifice of her rival, now that she could no longer be protected by the compassion of Don Juan de Lara. Then taking advantage of the inexperience of the king her son, Maria of Portugal obtained possession of her rival's wealth, and thus the extensive domains which Don Alfonso had given to his favourite devolved upon her who had just procured that mistress's doom. "Several in the kingdom," says Ayala, "were grieved at this deed, foreseeing that it would give rise to war as well as to scandal, Leonor having sons grown up and powerfully connected." The odium of the murder fell upon the queen, and the place where Leonor received her death warrant was henceforth called by the populace *Talavera de la Reyna*. But the hour of vengeance had not yet arrived, and the sons of Leonor bowed their heads before their mother's murderers.

Don Pedro, innocent doubtless of this bloodshed, quickly pursued his journey, and reached Valladolid before the arrival of the deputies from the towns. Under pretence of giving them time to assemble, Albuquerque led his royal pupil, attended by a small army, into several provinces of his kingdom. At first he directed his steps to Palencia, the neighbourhood of Don Tello, Leonor's third son, who was scarcely fifteen years of age and who, following the example of his elder brother, kept aloof from the court, shutting himself up in the castle of Palenzuela. It was apprehended that he might offer some resistance, and to prevent this, Don Juan Garcia Manrique, a rico hombre of Castile, was despatched as envoy from Don Pedro, charged to renew the king's promises of goodwill, and at the same time to gain over the knights, his advisers. Manrique succeeded in his mission, and brought Don Tello to Palencia. Following the advice of his guide, Don Tello ran to kiss his brother's hand. "Don Tello," said the king, "do you know that your mother, Doña Leonor, is dead?" "Sire," replied the youthful courtier, "I have no other father or mother save your grace."

II.

THE KING'S MINISTER AND THE KING'S FAVOURITE.

THE undivided sway which Albuquerque had thus far exercised was at length to pass into other hands. Until now we have seen Don Pedro with no other will than that of his minister: the time was approaching when this indolent acquiescence was to cease. Albuquerque and the queen-mother having determined upon marrying the young prince, had courted an alliance with the royal house of France. Don Pedro had been affianced when very young to Joanna, second daughter of Edward III. of England,* but that young princess unfortunately died at Bayonne on her way to Castile. During the session of the Cortes at Valladolid, ambassadors had travelled to Paris, charged in the name of Don Pedro, to demand the hand of Blanche, then scarcely fifteen years of age, a niece of King John of France, and daughter of the Duke of Bourbon. Though the proposal had met with a favourable reception from the French king, the princess, whose beauty, gentleness, and exquisite grace were an universal theme, had deferred her journey into Spain until the termination of the troubles which obliged Don Pedro to traverse his provinces at the head of an army. Whilst the Castilian minister was treating for this illustrious alliance he made no scruple to engage secretly in a less honourable negotiation, the success of which, however, according to his views, would ensure him the continuance of his influence over the royal mind. Already had the haughty temper of the young king been exhibited at different times by flashes of independence, evanescent as lightning, but alarming to a veteran politician accustomed to read his master's thoughts. He saw that in order to divert him from the inclination to govern alone, he must provide attractions more potent than the pleasures of the chase. The

* The treaty for a matrimonial alliance between Alfonso XI.'s son and Edward III.'s daughter may be seen in Rymer's "*Fœdera*."

reign of Don Alfonso had exhibited the powerful influence of a favourite, and the politic Albuquerque did not leave to chance the choice of a woman destined to play so important a part. Instead, therefore, of a rival, he would soon have had an ally, or rather an obsequious slave. In choosing, however, a mistress for his royal master, the cunning minister overreached himself in his guile, and was miserably disappointed. In Doña Maria de Padilla, a young lady brought up under the care of his wife, Doña Isabel de Meneses, he thought he had found the fittest person to assist him in his designs. An orphan, descended from an illustrious family* formerly attached to the Lara faction and ruined in the late civil wars, her brother and uncle, both poor and ambitious, are said to have acquiesced in this shameful transaction. Imagining that Doña Maria, having been nurtured in his own house, would always look upon him as her master, the crafty Albuquerque drew Don Pedro's attention towards her, and contrived their first interview, which took place during the expedition to the Asturias. Zurita, in a note to Ayala,† states that the king first met Doña Maria in the city of Leon, at the house of a caballero named Don Fernandez de Quinones, a relative of the young lady. The king fell in love at first sight of the youthful beauty, "who was," adds the Aragonese secretary, "the handsomest damsel in the world." This praise, however, though plenary, is anything but a definite description of the peculiar charms possessed by this royal favourite. The reticence of the gossiping chronicler is the more remarkable, as the Castilian tongue is rich in words characterising grace among women. Spain is, in fact, the country where this truly feminine quality most prevails. A few expressions will indicate distinctive shades easier to understand than

* Maria de Padilla was descended from Diego Nuñez de Padilla or Padilla, one of those row hunters who witnessed the privilege granted in 1033 to the church of Oñate by Sancho el Mayor first king of Castile. In 1165 Nuñez Gutier de Padilla founded the convent of St. Michael de Villamayor of the Premonstratensian order. The Padilla bore for coat armour in a field azure three spales (in Spanish padilla) argent with nine crescents of the same.

† "Cronica del Rey Don Pedro."

translate. *Garbo* signifies grace united with nobility; *donayre*, an elegant deportment, a joyous spirit; *salero*, voluptuous and fascinating gracefulness; *zandunga*, a species of grace peculiar to the Andalucians—a happy mixture of easy nonchalance and entire freedom from care. A Spaniard would praise the garbo or donayre of a duchess, the salero of an actress, the zandunga of a gitana of Jerez.

Doña Maria de Padilla was small in stature, like the majority of Spanish dames; pretty, lively, full of that voluptuous grace peculiar to the women of the South, and which the English language has no word adequately to express. As yet she was only distinguished by the sprightliness of her wit, which had afforded amusement to the noble lady with whom she lived in a capacity almost servile. Being older than the king (according to the writers we are following), Doña Maria possessed the advantage of having already studied mankind, and while mingling with the retinue of the prime minister had vigilantly observed all that passed at court. With such training she soon proved herself worthy to reign there.

It seems not unreasonable to infer that the young Castilian beauty in giving her heart to Don Pedro did not yield to the impulses of ambition alone. The king at eighteen was well formed, generous, high spirited, and undeniably in love. His passion, therefore, was surely sufficient of itself to win Doña Maria, even though it had not been rendered more seductive by the fascinations of a crown. But as both her protectors and her family conspired to overcome her scruples, it is not surprising that they succeeded in their design. It has been suggested that a promise of marriage probably had been given her by the king, or, as some authors have supposed, the marriage ceremonies were actually performed. If such, however, were really the case, the most profound secrecy must have been observed, and all Spain kept in ignorance of the fact, for Doña Maria was only regarded as the king's mistress. Her uncle, Juan Fernandez de Hínestrosa, himself conducted her to San Fagund, where Don Pedro halted on his return from the Asturias,

and placed her, so to speak, in the king's arms. This complaisance was right royally rewarded. Hinestrosa and the other relatives of the favourite, suddenly emerging from their obscurity, appeared at court, and began to share in the councils and patronage of the young prince.

"Already," writes Ayala,* "the uncle to Doña Maria, Diego Garcia de Padilla, her brother, and Juan Tenorio, who had been appointed the young king's repostero-mayor, were *privados* of the king." The last named of this triumvirate, who now succeeded to the influence of Albuquerque, belongs rather to romance than history. Juan Tenorio, the *Don Juan* of Molière, Mozart, and Byron, who have made his name as familiar to us as those of Robin Hood and Rob Roy, was a younger son of Don Alfonso Jufre Tenorio, a renowned Castilian admiral of Alfonso XI., and at an early age was admitted into the order of La Vanda, an order of knighthood then in high estimation. His birth and the position his father held in the late king's councils, independent of his personal qualities, would naturally attract the notice of a young and headstrong prince like Don Pedro, whose favourite he also speedily became.

Thus surrounded by the relatives and connexions of his mistress, who through her influence rapidly attained the highest honours, the young king was next instigated to rid himself of the importunate dictatorship of Albuquerque, and as the readiest means of effecting the overthrow of the minister, Doña Leonor suggested that Don Pedro should be reconciled to his bastard brothers. Though at this juncture the enamoured monarch lived only to obey the behests of his adored mistress, and contemplated his union with Blanche of Bourbon with the utmost repugnance, still he dared not come to an open rupture with his all-powerful minister.

During four months, whilst besieging the factious *ricos hombres* in Aguilar in Andalusia, whither Albuquerque had carried his royal master, Don Pedro had endured a forced separation from his charming favourite; but on the

* "Cronica del Rey Don Pedro."

fall of that fortress and the decapitation of its brave defender, Alonso Coronel, the royal lover hastened to rejoin his mistress at Cordova. She had just presented him with a daughter, whose birth was celebrated by magnificent fêtes. The greater part of Alonso Coronel's seignories and domains served the infant for an appanage; the remainder was distributed amongst the officers of the king's household. It was remarked that this time Don Juan de Albuquerque had no share in the spoils of his enemy. The king, though still keeping up appearances, began to treat his minister with coldness. His beloved favourite secretly instigated him to throw off a tutorage which had become irksome, and to take the reins of government into his own hands. Flattered by the praises of a woman whose superior talents as well as ardent affection he held in equal estimation, encouraged by the counsels of the Padillas, and above all urged by a vague yearning to display his own energy of character, he yet wavered in his resolution, held back probably by the habit of allowing himself to be directed, by his ignorance of business, or perhaps by the respect, and even fear, with which the old servant of his father inspired him.

Not daring to act openly, the king conspired against his minister in secret. Aided by the Padillas, he had committed himself to a project for nothing less than the overthrow of all the political schemes of Albuquerque. He assented to a complete and sincere reconciliation with his brothers Don Enrique and Don Tello. With their assistance and that of the Lara party, whom the Conde de Trastamara was to win over to his side, Don Pedro had no doubt that he might make himself absolute master, and rule according to the bent of his inclination. It was like a "barring-out" of scholars against their master. It can scarcely be conceived that such a boyish plot could have long escaped the detection of the subtle old minister. Such, however, was the fact. The secret was admirably kept—everything succeeded to the satisfaction of the youthful conspirators. Albuquerque fell into the first snare laid for him, by accepting a frivolous mission to the King of Portugal. To

quit the court was to leave the field open to his enemies. During his absence, a cavallero named Juan Gonzalez de Bazan, attached to the house of the Conde Don Enrique, became mediator between the king and the two Bastards, and the reconciliation was concluded with the same secrecy which had concealed the first negotiations.

Meanwhile Don Pedro's affianced bride, Blanche de Bourbon, was already in Castile, with a large and brilliant retinue of French nobles, headed by the ambassadors who had been sent to demand her of King John of France, her uncle. Don Pedro's mother and Queen Doña Leonor, his paternal aunt, had advanced to Valladolid in order to receive the princess. It was in this city that the marriage was to be solemnized, and they remained there several tedious months before the perverse young monarch seemed to think it necessary to join them. Released from the vigilance of his minister, and separated from his mother, he now felt himself at last a king, and had taken up his residence at Torrijos, near Toledo, giving fêtes and tournaments in honour of his mistress, of whom he was more enamoured than ever. Intoxicated with a round of amusements and the lavish flattery of his young court, he seemed to have forgotten the matrimonial alliance he had solemnly contracted, and to be wholly engrossed in contriving new pleasures. In a tourney in which he wore the colours of his favourite, and was one of the challengers, Don Pedro was seriously wounded in the arm. This hurt perhaps contributed to prolong his sojourn at Torrijos. But in the midst of these gaieties there suddenly appeared a severe countenance, it was that of Albuquerque, who was unexpectedly recalled by the public scandal his royal master's conduct had provoked. The minister's language was stern and grave. He represented the affront done to the house of France, and the anxiety of all his subjects in Castile, who expected from their sovereign's marriage a guarantee for future tranquillity. The troubles that a temporary malady with which he had been afflicted in the first year of his reign had occasioned ought to have proved to Don Pedro how critical would be the position of

his whole kingdom were his death to take place be birth of a direct heir. The respect due to a solemn the future well-being of his country, and the honour crown obliged him without further delay to conclude alliance with the princess his betrothed. Convinced his will by this obvious reasoning, and yielding to the ascendancy of his austere counsellor, Don Pedro consented to set out for Valladolid. About the commencement of 1353, he left Maria de Padilla in the strong castle of Montalvan, under the care of a bastard brother named Juan Garcia de Villagera. Every measure his love could suggest was taken to render this place secure against an assault. Nor did the king attempt to do that all these precautions appeared to him necessary to counteract the evil disposition of Albuquerque. Still ill at ease and sorrowful, he started for Valladolid.

III.

THE OLD MINISTER OUTWITTED BY THE BOY PRINCE.

MUCH about the same time, Don Enrique and Don Pedro were furnished with a "safe-conduct" for their journey by Gonzalez de Bazan, who in his official capacity was charged to invite them to the king's nuptials, had set out with numerous attendants that it might have been taken for granted they were an army. Having reached Cigales, about two leagues from Valladolid, they encamped there with six hundred and fifteen hundred Asturian foot soldiers, and proclaimed that they were going to the king's wedding. They refused, however, to enter the city, unless their escort was admitted with them. They recollected the assassination of Garci Laso de la Vega, and declared that they would not, like him, be deceived by the hollow promises of Albuquerque.

A few days later, Don Pedro, attended by his

court, made his entry into Valladolid. The next morning, the minister, accompanied by the king and a numerous body of troops, sallied forth with the intention of attacking Don Enrique and Don Tello at Cigales. The two brothers, he affirmed, must have had some evil intention, or they would not have come attended by so powerful an escort, habited in coats of mail, and with banners displayed. Since they dared to appear at an august and peaceful ceremony in battle array, the opportunity of exterminating them must not be lost. The king, knowing the true designs of his brothers, listened in silence, issued no commands, but did not refuse to march against them. On the part of Don Enrique the secret had been as well kept as on that of the king, and all his suite were ignorant of the negotiations conducted by Gonzalez de Bazan. Without consulting anyone, Don Enrique ranged his men in open field, and waited unmoved the approach of the little army from Valladolid. Between the two bands flowed a stream having high banks on either side, which would have presented a serious obstacle to the first who decided upon trying the offensive, but neither the king nor his brother had the slightest intention of coming to an engagement. Albuquerque alone urged the conflict, and promised victory. Whilst the king's soldiers, fatigued with their long march, were taking breath, conferences were pending between the rival forces. At the king's command, Diego Garcia de Padilla, brother to his mistress, and Juan de Hinojosa, went to parley with the Conde de Trastámara. The choice of such envoys was sufficient to prove that Don Pedro would not follow the warlike counsels of his minister.

Despite the impatience of Albuquerque, the conference still continued. In vain he represented that it was just the hour for vespers, and that the conde was only waiting for the night in order to escape. Don Pedro restrained his soldiers, and waited with the utmost composure the issue of the negotiation. At last, towards the close of day, the Conde Don Enrique, Don Tello, and about thirty gentlemen might be seen advancing between the two armies, unarmed.

and all on foot. They came to throw themselves upon the king's mercy. Don Pedro remained on horseback with his suite, and his two brothers passing through the midst of a line of men-at-arms, drew near to his stirrups. First Don Enrique, then Don Tello, underwent the humiliation of kissing his foot and next his right hand. Then the king, springing to the ground, led them into a little hermitage, where for some time he remained alone with them and several nobles of the two parties. There the conde, in his own name and that of the knights who followed his banner, protested his entire submission, assigning as an excuse for his past conduct the fear with which he was naturally inspired by the powerful enemies who, as he said, had calumniated him to his lord.

"Conde, my brother," replied the king, "I am glad to see you, as well as Don Tello our brother. Now trust to my honour. Be assured that you will receive from me such favours as shall perfectly satisfy you."

The two Bastards then promised the king to deliver up to him all their fortresses, and forthwith placed in the hands of his alguazil-mayor several important hostages, amongst others the young son of Garci Laso. The presence of this child, in company of the Conde de Trastamara, sufficiently proved that his expedition had been concerted previously with Don Pedro, and was intended to have a pacific issue. The people received the intelligence of this reconciliation with acclamation. Albuquerque alone was displeased by it, rightly viewing in this transaction a proof of the growing power of the Padillas, and a humiliating check to his own authority. To his vexation was superadded the shame that he, an old politician, should have been duped by the children over whom he had hitherto domineered.

IV

MARRIAGE OF DON PEDRO WITH BLANCHE OF BOURBON

THE marriage of Don Pedro with the princess of France was solemnized upon the 3rd of June, almost immediately after the interview at Cigales. The king now showed as much impatience to conclude the matter as he had formerly exhibited unwillingness and irresolution. No one, however, could attribute this change to the impression produced by the charms of Blanche. The king still appeared insensible to them, he hardly noticed her, but convinced that his marriage was a duty, and even a necessity, he hastened its accomplishment in order to obtain repose. The betrothed pair were led in great pomp to the church of St. Maria la Nueva. The order of the procession seemed to have been regulated in such a manner as to prove to all beholders that the disturbances of Castile were now terminated for ever. The Conde de Trastamara, Don Tello, Albuquerque, the Infantes of Aragon, and the greater number of the *ricos hombres* who had taken part in the late troubles, accompanied the royal progress, perhaps somewhat surprised at seeing themselves together anywhere but in a field of battle. First came Don Pedro and Blanche de Bourbon, mounted upon white palfreys, and clad in robes of gold brocade bordered with ermine, a costume then worn by none but sovereigns. Albuquerque was godfather to the king, while the queen dowager of Aragon, Doña Leonor, acted as the young queen's mother. It was remarked that Doña Margarita de Lara, sister to Don Juan Nuñez, was selected for her maid of honour, and as though Blanche had purposely surrounded herself with proscribed persons, she had for her esquire the Conde de Trastamara, who held the bridle of her horse. The Infante Don Fernando led his mother Doña Leonor's horse, and his brother Don Juan performed the like office for Queen Maria. Thus, in this procession, the bastard Don Enrique took precedence of the Infantes

of Aragon, an honour which some thought excessive, and which was by others considered merely as a proof of the sincerity of the reconciliation between the sons of Don Alfonso.

The religious ceremony was followed by a tourney, *juegos de canas*, and a bull-fight, which festivities were renewed the next day. But in the midst of these rejoicings, all eyes were turned with curiosity towards the newly-married pair. Every one could read in the countenance of the king coldness and even aversion to his fair companion; and as this insensibility to the attractions of the French princess was difficult to account for in a man of his age and ardent temperament, it was whispered from one to another that he had been spell-bound by Maria de Padilla, and that his eyes, enchanted by her magic art, could see only a repulsive object, instead of the youthful beauty he had just led to the altar.*

Aversion, like sympathy, has its inexplicable mysteries; nevertheless, grave authors have endeavoured to find some real or plausible motive for the estrangement of Don Pedro from his young and lovely bride. Modern writers, however, not having, like their predecessors, the convenient resource of magic, have not scrupled to sully the queen's character, invariably respected by all her contemporaries, by an odious calumny. It has been alleged that Don Fadrique was one of the ambassadors charged to demand of the King of France the hand of his niece, and that, on her journey from Paris to Valladolid, Blanche had fallen a victim to the seductions of her brother-in-law. If this were really the

* The enchantment of Don Pedro by Maria de Padilla is a popular tradition in Andalucia, where both of them are still held in lively remembrance. It is moreover added, that Maria de Padilla was a Queen of Gitanos, their *bari cral-lisa*, consequently skilled in the art of preparing philters. But unfortunately for the consistency of such legend, the gipsies did not appear in Europe till a century later. The author of the "Life of Pope Innocent VI." gravely relates that Blanche having presented to her husband a golden girdle, Maria de Padilla, aided by a Jew, a noted sorcerer, changed the girdle into a serpent one day that the king wore it. The surprise of the king and indeed of the whole court, when the girdle began to writhe and hiss, may be imagined. Upon which Maria de Padilla easily managed to persuade her lover that Blanche was a magician, who by her arts meditated his ruin.—"Histoire des Papes d'Avignon," vol. i. p. 224.

case, the king's aversion to his wife and hatred to Don Fadrique, the result of which will be described hereafter, might both be attributed to jealousy. This supposition, however, confronted with incontestable facts, must be utterly false. Don Fadrique did not form part of the Castilian embassy, and indeed did not quit the peninsula at the period of the negotiations between France and the Castilian court. There are authentic documents existing which attest his residence in the south of Spain during the early months of the year 1353, and previous to the king's marriage he had never even seen his sister-in-law. It may be added, that if there really had been any excuse for breaking off this marriage, or any real grievance, or even the very slightest imputation against the character of Blanche, Don Pedro would doubtless have eagerly seized the opportunity, now that, freed from his minister's tutorage, and enthralled by his love for Doña Maria, he wished nothing more ardently than to exercise his own authority and power.

No one at Valladolid was ignorant of the king's sentiments, and a report had spread that he would shortly leave the city and return to his mistress. On the 5th of June—that is to say, two days only after the solemnization of his marriage—while Don Pedro was dining alone in his palace, his mother and aunt entered, bathed in tears, and requested to speak to him in private. The king immediately quitted the table and led them into his cabinet.

“Son,” said the queen-mother, “we hear that you intend leaving us in order to rejoin Doña Maria de Padilla. We come to conjure you not to act thus, and to consider what an affront it will be to the king of France, who has just sent you his niece with so much state and magnificence. Would you thus leave her at the moment when you have just been united to her at the holy altar, in the presence of all the nobles of your realm? What will all our *ricos hombres*, who have come from so great a distance to do you honour, think, if you depart in this manner without making them proper acknowledgments, without even addressing a single gracious word to them?”

The king interrupted her by saying that he was much surprised that they should give credit to such unfounded reports, and after repeating that he had no intention of quitting Valladolid, hastily dismissed them. An hour later he called for mules, announcing that he was about to visit his mother, but in reality purposing to leave the town accompanied only by Diego de Padilla, the brother of his favourite, and two others of his most intimate cavalleros. Relays were ready at certain distances, and he rested that night sixteen leagues from Valladolid. The next morning he found Doña Maria at the Puebla de Montalvan, whither she had come to meet him.

This event had been foreseen; great, however, was the surprise at Valladolid, although rather feigned than real on the part of the two Bastards, between whom and the Padillas there was already one bond of union, namely a common hatred of Albuquerque.

V.

THE FALL OF ALBUQUERQUE.

After the first moments of consternation, Albuquerque presented himself before the three disconsolate queens, accompanied by Don Juan Nuñez de Prado, the Master of Calatrava, and his own intimate friend. No less irritated than the royal ladies, but having found time to regain his self-possession and authoritative demeanour, he swore to them that their cause was his, and that, after having chastised the insolent adventurers who had poisoned the mind of the king with their perfidious counsels, he would bring Don Pedro back. He immediately set out for Toledo, whither the king had already repaired with the Padillas, his brothers, and the Infantes of Aragon. Albuquerque left Valladolid with a retinue of more than 1500 cavaliers. To the troop of hidalgos of his own house were added a large number of knights, vassals or pensionaries of the king, who were as

yet undecided whether they should swell the youthful court or remain faithful to the minister—whether they should offer up their incense to the veteran Albuquerque or to the royal favourite. All determined to observe matters more closely, and to study for themselves the countenance of the king, and the extent of the power of his new counsellors. The historian Lopez de Ayala (whose trustworthy narrative we are closely following) and his father were among them.

At a short distance from Toledo, some cavallos who had ridden out of that city conversed with their friends just arrived from Valladolid. Some of them did not attempt to conceal that they were making great preparations for war at Toledo. All the gates, with one exception, were blocked up, and the alguazil mayor, charged with the police regulations of the city, had just been cashiered, and replaced by a creature of the Padillas. This new officer was Alfonso Jufre Tenorio, and of whom Ayala speaks as "*hermano de Don Juan Tenorio, repostero mayor del rey et su privado, que era amigo de los parientes de Doña Maria de Padilla*"*. From this it is clear that the Tenorio family owed the favour they enjoyed at court to the popularity of that same young friend of the Padillas—the desperate libertine Don of Mozart's immortal opera, and the hero of Lord Byron's erotic and very eccentric poem—

* We all have seen him in the pantomime
Sent to the Devil somewhat ere his time

Alfonso Jufre was the head of the house of Tenorio.

These disclosures of the Toledan cavallos at first slightly disturbed the confidence of Albuquerque. He began, however, to feel more and more uncomfortable at every step he took southwards. At length he halted and took counsel of his friends. A second message arrived from the king, pressing him with an urgency that appeared suspicious to repair immediately to the Alcazar. Contrary recommendations, sent by his secret partisans at Toledo, increased his distrust and made him apprehend an ambuscade. So soon

* "*Cronica del Rey Don Pedro*," p. 100

as his irresolution betrayed his alarm, all his servants, trembling for his safety, conjured him not to place himself in the power of a weak-minded prince ruled by a treacherous faction.

The crafty minister was too old a fox to be caught in such a palpable trap. Albuquerque had cause to apprehend cruel reprisals, and had, moreover, himself taught his enemies to make light of oaths. He followed the dictates of prudence, and turned tail with vulpine cunning, after having despatched his majordomo, Ruy Diaz Cabeza de Vaca, with this haughty message,—

“Sire,” he said, “Don Juan Alonso kisses your hands, and commends himself to your favour. He would be this moment in your presence, if he had not learned that evil-minded counsellors have calumniated him to you. You know, sire, all that Don Juan Alonso has done in your service, and in that of the queen your mother. He has been your chancellor ever since your birth. He has always served you loyally, as he served the late king your father. For you he ran great personal risk at the time when Leonor de Guzman and her faction had supreme power in the kingdom. As yet my master is ignorant of the crimes laid to his charge; when they are known to him he will immediately clear his character. Meanwhile, if any cavallero question his honour and loyalty, I, his vassal, am ready to answer him with my body, sword in hand.”

The cold and immoveable countenance of Don Pedro whilst listening to this proud set speech revealed his indifference to the defiance which clinched it. He answered briefly that if Albuquerque put faith in idle rumours, he was free to retire whither and whenever he chose; but if he were wise he would trust to the king's clemency. He then abruptly dismissed the messenger, ill concealing his satisfaction at getting rid of an inconvenient monitor. Burning to be thoroughly “lord of himself,” yet perhaps ashamed of turning off his father's faithful adviser, he was delighted to see Albuquerque retire of his own accord. As soon, therefore, as the young monarch felt that he had shaken himself free from distasteful counsels, he no longer disguised his intentions, but removing the then possessors from all the

several offices bestowed upon them during the late minister's day of favour, distributed them among the partisans and friends of his adored favourites the Padillas. There was a complete reaction, and to be in disgrace at court, it now only sufficed to have been formerly patronized by Albuquerque.

Meanwhile the fallen and exasperated minister, his escort considerably reduced, retook the road to Valladolid, after having stopped at Terradon to consult with his friend the Master of Calatrava. Both agreed that for the present open resistance was impossible, that they must wait with patience the return of fortune, and keeping upon their guard, live at a distance from the court, the one on the Portuguese frontier, in the midst of his own domains, the other in one of the castles of his order, surrounded by his knights. Before setting out for his fortress, Albuquerque took leave of those disconsolate ladies, the three queens, and gave them his last word of advice. Then collecting the treasures which he had kept in his various castles in Castile—for, like a prudent farmer mindful of the ancient warning, he placed not all his eggs in one basket—he went and shut himself up in the fortress of Carrajales—selected as the rendezvous for his trusty friends. Besides those attached to his house, his escort was augmented during his march by a tolerably large number of caballeros who were resolved to share his fortunes. All these, imagining—or choosing to imagine—that a civil war had commenced, pillaged and laid waste the countries through which they passed. This was the ordinary mode, in those days, by which a feudal lord testified his dissatisfaction. Albuquerque, if he did not encourage these excesses, at least took no measures to repress them: probably he was not unwilling to compromise his adherents, and thus ensure their fidelity by the apprehension of the punishment which such conduct in his service would entail upon them.

Don Pedro, engrossed solely by his passion for Maria de Padilla, never once thought of pursuing the fugitive, but celebrated by carouses and fêtes what he termed his real accession to the throne. Whilst the youthful court was

diverting itself at the expense of the disgraced minister, Doña Maria de Padilla, satisfied with having displayed the extent of her power, gave an example of moderation unusual in women in her position. She advised the king to return to Valladolid for some time, and to visit his bride, in order to prevent scandal and save appearances. Secure of her lover's affections, she considered his reputation so long as she was not sacrificed to it. The sensible advice of the favourite was seconded by her relatives, by Gutier Fernandez, and by Juan Tenorio. Accordingly, Don Pedro, though with manifest reluctance, reappeared at Valladolid, and remained two days in the same palace with his wife. Then, as if weary of playing a part which he could so ill sustain, he suddenly returned to his mistress. Vainly did the Padillas entreat him to prolong his stay at Valladolid; they could not induce his impatient spirit to remain there an hour longer. This was the last time that he saw his wife, and a visit thus abruptly terminated seemed but an additional insult. The Vicomte de Narbonne, and other French nobles who had accompanied Queen Blanche to Castile, indignantly departed, without taking leave of the king.* The queen-mother conducted the forlorn bride to Tordesillas, on the Duero, the place of residence, or rather of exile, which Don Pedro had assigned her.

It is the common delusion of disgraced ministers to imagine a revolution must needs follow their retirement from office. Albuquerque, shut up in his castle of Carvajales, saw with vexation the indifference of Castile. Although the conduct of the king towards his wife was generally blamed, his frank resolution to govern by himself was much applauded. His reconciliation with his brothers had been seen with pleasure, and above all, the favour which he had shown to the Lara party, whose name was generally popular, gave universal satisfaction. Maria de Padilla appeared gentle and obliging, seeking to conceal her power, or only revealing it by her generous actions. Her relations were clever, and it was admitted that they served the king efficiently.

* "*Cronica del Rey Don Pedro*," p. 103.

How could it possibly concern the commons and the majority of the nobility whether certain court offices were occupied by the creatures of Albuquerque or by the relatives of the favourite? With the exception of a small number of *ricos hombres*, who were personally affected by his disgrace, Albuquerque felt that he was forsaken by the people as well as by his king. Despairing of regaining power, he now began to tremble for his immense wealth. His wide lands were a strong temptation, and pretexts were not wanting for seizing them. The disorders of his adherents also, whose conduct was as imprudent as culpable, gave to his retirement the character of rebellion. He must devise some means of disarming the king's anger. Misfortune had speedily humbled his pride, and he eagerly accepted a kind of treaty that was offered him in his sovereign's name. He consented to deliver up his sons as hostages, and to give security for the good behaviour of his vassals. In return, the king guaranteed to him the possession of all the lands he held in Castile, and granted him permission to reside in Portugal. The Infante Don Fernando de Aragon was invested with the office of Lord High Chancellor.

Though proud of having humbled the most powerful of his great vassals, Don Pedro had no wish to crush him entirely. He could not forget the long services of Albuquerque under King Don Alfonso, and perhaps his conscience reproached him for having withdrawn his favour at the very time when he was receiving from him most valuable counsels. But young, imperious even to harshness, he desired to be feared, above all by those *ricos hombres* who were placed so near the throne that they seemed to him like so many rivals. He openly announced his intention of administering prompt and rigorous justice.

Their chief having unexpectedly submitted, nothing remained for those *cavalleros* and *hidalgos* who were immediate vassals of the king, but to abandon the fallen minister and return to their feudal suzerain and implore in their turn the royal clemency. They left Carrvalos with Albuquerque's son, the hostage for his father's fidelity, but

instead of repairing directly to Olmedo, where the king then was, they dared to stop at Tordesillas and present themselves to the queen-mother and the French princess her daughter-in-law. There, no doubt, the wrath of Don Pedro, his unrelenting temperament, his threats, and the scaffold he was preparing, were painted in glowing colours. The majority were alarmed, and despairing to obtain pardon, determined on taking flight. Two knights only, bolder than the rest, ventured to continue their route to Olmedo. These were Alvar Gonzalez de Moran and Alvar Perez de Castro, the brother of that Inez de Castro who was mistress to the Infante Pedro of Portugal, and afterwards so famous through her cruel death and the honours which her lover paid to her memory. Doña Maria de Padilla, naturally humane and compassionate, wished to save these two brave gentlemen, against whom the king exhibited especial animosity. She warned them that they had not a moment to lose if they wished to escape the punishment already decreed for them. Advice from such a source was too precious to be disregarded, and Moran and Alvar de Castro immediately retraced their steps. At Medina del Campo they found, thanks to the care of the queen-mother, relays in waiting for them; and this act of forethought was soon proved to have been very necessary. De Castro especially, being hotly pursued, owed his safety entirely to the extraordinary fleetness of his horse. The flying cavallero having arrived safe in Nueva Castro, found there an old acquaintance, the Prior of San Juan, whom he besought to furnish him with a fresh horse, as the one he rode, the gift of the queen-mother, was almost knocked up. Whilst thus engaged conversing with the prior, Benavides, the king's justiciar-mayor, who had been despatched in pursuit, and who had overtaken the fugitive's mules and baggage, entered the town. Don Alvar, on hearing this, remounted Doña Maria's good jennet, and went out at the opposite side. Meantime the king's justiciar-mayor searched every house in Nueva Castro, imagining that Don Alvar lay concealed in the town. His search, however, proving unsuccessful, Benavides left Nueva Castro and arrived at

Morales shortly after Don Alvar had quitted that place. At Morales the justiciar, feeling both himself and his horse dead beat, sent Rodriguez Osorio, whom he had found in the town, after the fugitive. Osorio, not daring to refuse, started, "but," adds Ayala, "sore against his will." His fresh horse soon came up with the jaded steed Don Alvar bestrode. Osorio, however, instead of capturing him, abetted his escape, pointing out a road to Castrotorafe, where Albuquerque was then staying. Don Alvar followed the advice of his friendly pursuer and reached Castrotorafe in safety. The greater number of his companions, less fortunate than he, after having escaped from Tordesillas, were arrested by the king's officers and led to Olmedo in chains. They expected immediate execution, but the anger of the king could not resist the prayers and tears of his mistress. After a few days' detention, all these unfortunate men were restored to liberty.

In the meantime Don Fadrique, the Master of Santiago, who had not seen the king since the death of his mother Doña Leonor de Guzman, reappeared at court, and was received with open arms. It might have been that Don Pedro wanted to assemble his brothers around him, in order to associate them in the government. Following the example of Don Enrique and Don Tello, the young Master of St. Jago sought the friendship of the favourite's relations. Upon an intimation from the king, he took the Grand Commandery of Castile from Ruy Chacon, and bestowed it upon Diego Garcia de Villagera, a bastard brother of Maria de Padilla. As a reward for this ready compliance with his wishes, the king yielded up certain rights appertaining to his order, which had been contested by the crown. Don Tello, on his side, took advantage of his brother's friendly disposition to obtain his consent to a very advantageous marriage. In the late king's reign he had been affianced when quite a child to Doña Juana de Lara, the eldest daughter of Don Juan Nuñez, and now heiress of the Lord of Biscay. The distrust of Albuquerque had always opposed this union. He had sequestered all the estates of Doña Juana, and Biscay was thus annexed to the crown domains. As if he

took pleasure in any policy which was contrary to that of his minister, Don Pedro was himself present at the marriage of the heiress of the Laras, and restored to her all her estates. Immediately after the nuptials, solemnized with great pomp at Segovia, Don Tello repaired to Biscay to take possession of the rich dowry his wife had brought him: it was, in fact, a little kingdom.

Don Pedro about the same time quitted Castile, and accompanied by his whole court, took the road to Andalucia, where he proposed to spend the remainder of the autumn and winter. Irritated, however, by the share the two queens had taken in the escape of Alvar de Castro, he first separated Blanche of Bourbon from Queen Maria, with whom she had lived ever since her arrival in Castile. The young princess, already treated as a prisoner, although a small court and a royal palace had been assigned her, was conducted to the castle of Arevalo and placed under the eye of the Bishop of Segovia.* The queen-mother received permission, perhaps a command, to go and reside in Portugal with the king her father. These severe measures were accompanied by new persecutions directed against the friends of Albuquerque. The king took from Gutier Fernandez de Toledo the office of chamberlain in order to entrust it to Diego de Padilla. All the relations of Gutier Fernandez shared in his disgrace, and saw the offices of which they had been despoiled bestowed upon the family of the favourite and the adherents of the Bastards, upon whom as many honours were now lavished as in the time of the late king. Perez Ponce, Master of Alcantara, and uncle to Leonor de Guzman, had incurred a sequestration of his castles in Andalucia on account of having been the first to take up arms upon the accession of Don Pedro. His fortresses were now restored, and he was solemnly reinstated in their possession by the king himself, who appeared to have resolved to efface every remembrance of Albuquerque's administration: men and things were alike relentlessly changed.

* According to Mariana, she was not even suffered to speak to one of her guards.—“*Historia de Espana*,” lib. xvi. c. xviii.

VI

THE HAROUN AL RASCHID OF SEVILLE

Accusing his late minister of partiality and injustice, Don Pedro announced, with perhaps a little too much confidence, that now that he reigned alone, neither rank nor favour should influence him. Of all the promises made to the Cortes of Valladolid, that one was the most faithfully kept by which he solemnly pledged himself to attend to every complaint brought before him. In the court of the Alcazar at Seville, near the gate *de las Banderas*, are shown the remains of a tribunal in the open air, where Don Pedro was wont to sit and hear causes. Affable to the multitude, although frequently stern and haughty to the great, he would be acquainted with everything—would see everything with his own eyes. After the example of the caliphs, legends concerning whom had doubtless amused his childhood, he took pleasure in disguising himself and wandering alone in the night-time through the streets of Seville, either to gain an insight into the secret opinions of the people, or to seek adventures and watch the conduct of the police of that great city. These mysterious rambles have furnished Spanish romancists and poets with the arguments for a thousand dramatic stories, the majority little worthy of credence, but nevertheless remarkable, because one and all agree in the character they ascribe to Don Pedro, and are thus faithful echoes of the popular tradition, which is not entirely without value to the historian. In truth, although the people may not be strictly accurate as to facts, they are upon the whole correct judges of men. To them Don Pedro was the defender of the oppressed, the redresser of wrongs, and the fierce enemy of all the iniquities of the feudal régime. It is true, however, that a very little of this chivalrous spirit goes a great way towards satisfying the commonalty, who are usually ready to give their masters credit for good intentions.

The justice of Don Pedro, which has become proverbial, was like that of the Moorish sovereigns—prompt, severe, almost always passionate, and frequently capricious in its form.*

A singular anecdote of this king's nocturnal ramblings, immortalized as it is by a monument still existing at Seville, and authenticated by the most careful writers, ought not, perhaps, to be rejected by modern criticism on account of the romantic colours with which it has been embellished by tradition.

One night Don Pedro, it is related, passing alone and disguised through a back street of Seville, quarrelled with a stranger upon some frivolous pretext. Tradition—ever minutely circumstantial—records that the stranger was “keeping guard” over the street; that is, that he was hindering passers by from entering it, either to speak without interruption to a woman, or to procure that facility for a friend.† Swords were drawn, and the king killed his adversary. At the approach of the officers of justice, he took flight and regained the Alcazar, imagining that he had not been recognised. An inquest was held. The only witness of the duel was an old woman, who, by the light of a lamp, had confusedly beheld the tragical scene. According to her deposition, the two cavaliers had concealed their faces under their cloaks, as was the custom with the gallants of Andalusia; but the knees of one of them, the victor, in walking, cracked. Now everyone at Seville knew that this cracking of the knees was peculiar to the king, and the consequence of some malformation, which did not, however, prevent him from being active and expert in all bodily exercises. Somewhat embarrassed by this discovery, the alguazils could not determine whether they should punish the old woman, or, which would be still better, purchase her silence. The king, however, ordered a sum of money

* Hence Don Pedro is called in Spanish history the *Justiciar* as frequently as the *Cruel*.

† This custom a few years ago still existed in Spain, and was the occasion of many duels.

to be given her, and avowed himself to be the guilty person. It now remained to punish the offender, which was a difficult matter. The law was explicit in such a case, the murderer ought to be beheaded, and his head exposed on the place where the crime had been committed. Don Pedro ordered that his head, wearing a crown, should be carved in stone, and the bust placed in a niche in the middle of the street which had been the scene of the combat. This bust was restored in the seventeenth century, and is still to be seen in the Calle del Candilejo in Seville*.

This ingenious mode of escaping out of a dilemma, although conformable to the customs of the middle ages, "proved rather the king's fertility of invention," remarks a modern writer, "than his impartiality." The following anecdote will give a more favourable idea of his justice. A priest provided with a rich benefice had deeply injured a shoemaker. On being brought before an ecclesiastical tribunal—the only one to which he was amenable—the priest was, for his crime, suspended for some months from the exercise of his sacerdotal functions. The artisan, dissatisfied with the sentence, determined to punish the offence himself, and, lying in wait for his adversary, inflicted upon him severe corporeal chastisement. He was immediately arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. He appealed to the king. The gross partiality of the ecclesiastical judges had produced much scandal. Don Pedro parodied their sentence by condemning the shoemaker to abstain from making shoes for a year.

VII

CIVIL WAR—CAPTIVITY OF DON PEDRO

SEVERAL acts of aggression on the part of the followers of Albuquerque, provoked by the violence of the Padillas,

* It is said that this name was given to the street in memory of the lamp which cast its light upon the duelists.—Zufiiga "Anales Ecclesiasticos de Sevilla."

furnished Don Pedro with a pretext for breaking the treaty which he had just concluded, and even for attacking the object of his resentment, the chief of the faction. In the spring of the year 1354, Don Pedro suddenly appeared with a little army before Medellin, a town in Estremadura, of which Albuquerque was lord. The holders of the castle capitulated to the king, who immediately ordered it to be dismantled. After this success, Don Pedro quickly bent his steps towards the town of Albuquerque, the principal lordship of Don Juan Alonso, whose surname was derived from it, and invested that place. The siege giving promise of a long duration, Don Pedro left his two brothers, Don Fadrique and Don Enrique, with Juan de Villagera, before the castle, and after having despatched ambassadors to the King of Portugal, demanding that Albuquerque should be delivered up to him, returned to Castile.

Whilst, therefore, hostilities were feebly prosecuted on the Portuguese frontier, Don Pedro, in the fickleness of youthful power uncontrolled, forgot his kingdom and his vengeance in a new passion. Maria de Padilla seemed to have lost the empire which she had hitherto exercised over his heart. Having suffered much for some time, and now feeling the period of pregnancy approaching, she announced her intention of quitting the court and the world, and retiring into a cloister. It is unknown, and it is a matter of little import, what lovers' quarrels had provoked this sudden resolution; but it is certain that Don Pedro, far from opposing his mistress's project, pressed its execution. He even wrote to the Pope to solicit the necessary authorities for founding a convent under the patronage of Santa Clara, of which Maria de Padilla was to be the superior, and wherein she would take the vows.*

The rupture was complete, and appeared irrevocable. The king was in love with Doña Juana, daughter of Don Pedro de Castro, surnamed De la Guerra, and widow of Don Diego de Haro, a descendant of the ancient Lords of

* This permission was granted by Innocent VI.—Rainaldi, "*Annales Eccl.*" year 1354.

Biscay As virtuous as she was fair, Doña Juana was proof against all temptations The passion of the king only increasing with the opposition it met, he at last spoke of marriage, and offered his hand and crown to the young widow Strange as this proposition appeared, the relations of Doña Juana at once perceived that a prince so violent and impetuous would overcome every obstacle It was, however, first necessary to prove that he was free to wed Don Pedro pretended that his marriage with Blanche de Bourbon was null and void, and upon this delicate point gave explanations which remained secret, but which satisfied Enrique Enriquez, the husband of one of Doña Juana's aunts, and Men Rodriguez de Senabria, a Galician knight, both of whom were charged, in the character of arbiters, to make inquiry into the position of the king The arguments employed to convince them may be imagined, when we see Enriquez obtain as a guarantee for the execution of the promise of marriage made by the king the custody of the castles of Jaen, Dueñas, and Castrojeriz Probably the complaisance of Men Rodriguez was purchased in a similar manner Don Pedro, thus fortified with their approbation, repaired directly to Cuellar, the residence of the fur Juana She, however, exacted one more proof of his ability to marry her ere her last scruples could be overcome At her entreaty two prelates, the bishops of Salamanca and Avila, were sent for by the king, and commanded to attest that he was free to contract marriage Whether they yielded to threats, or suffered themselves to be won by presents, they did not hesitate to confirm the decision of the first arbiters Doña Juana then consented, and the marriage was immediately solemnized in the church of Cuellar, where the Bishop of Salamanca pronounced a benediction on the wedded pair

However headstrong the passions of a king of eighteen, it is difficult to account for so scandalous an act as this Can we admit Don Pedro to have been really in error with respect to the validity of his union with Blanche of Bourbon? Ayala, the only contemporary who furnishes us with any

information concerning this singular transaction, relates that the king, in order to prove the nullity of his marriage with the French princess, would have appealed to certain protests made by him at Valladolid at the time of his marriage. But of these protests there exists no trace, and indeed they were never afterwards produced. Besides, what coercion could have taken place? At the period when Don Pedro joined Blanche, the authority, or more properly the domination of Albuquerque, had yielded to the ascendancy of Maria de Padilla—that is, to the person most interested in finding arguments or pretexts against the marriage. Now, on the contrary, it has been seen that Maria de Padilla interfered to effect a kind of reconciliation between her lover and the young queen. What time could Don Pedro have found more favourable, not merely to protest against his marriage, but to break it off, than that of his arrival at Valladolid, when, aided by the forces of Don Enrique and Don Tello, he had just shaken off the yoke of his mother and his minister?

Notwithstanding all these considerations, it seems unwise to absolutely refuse credence to the assumption of a protest having been secretly made by the king. He might, perhaps, while yielding to the entreaties of his mother and some of his counsellors, wish to reserve for a future day the means of declaring the nullity of a union which he had contracted with the greatest reluctance. Doubtless, any reservations he might then make, according to his own calculations, could only be for the advantage of Maria de Padilla. Now he used them against her. His duplicity with regard to Doña Juana soon became manifest. Subsequent circumstances prove that in a fit of ill-humour he sought to give Maria de Padilla a rival, or perhaps only to show her that he could bestow his affection upon another. Fascinated for a moment by the beauty of Doña Juana, and irritated by her resistance, he had recourse to this sacrilegious farce as the only means of vanquishing her scruples. No cost was too great, so that he could gratify his passion. He gains over to his interest the relatives of Doña Juana, he corrupts

or intimidates the bishops, he takes all the oaths required of him, and at last succeeds in celebrating an impious marriage. But no sooner has he enjoyed his new conquest than he raises the mask. From the day succeeding that of his nuptials, his good faith may be duly estimated.

The stipulated order for the surrender of the castles to Enrique Enriquez is revoked. The same day he quits Doña Juana, never to see her again, leaving her only the demesne of Dueñas, a kind of indemnity which he could not refuse his victim.* The sacrilege of a double marriage did not arrest the course of Don Pedro for a moment. He was aware that all the odium would fall upon the bishops who sanctioned it. The age of the king, and his unbridled love of pleasure, scarcely allow us to attribute to him, in this transaction, the calculations of a crafty policy. He had, however, already humbled the clergy by his decrees at Seville. Perhaps at Cuellar he exulted in compromising two illustrious prelates, feeling certain that the scandal of their compliance with his wishes would reflect upon the whole church, whose power and influence he sought to diminish.

VIII.

COALITION BETWEEN THE BASTARD PRINCES AND ALBUQUERQUE.

The web of life is truly of a mingled yarn. On the same day as that of the marriage—if such a mockery of the holy rite may be so termed—of Don Pedro with Juana de Castro,

* Doña Juana, in the sequel, kept the title of Queen. This appears to have greatly annoyed Don Pedro, who, however, took no step to oblige her to renounce the title. Juana de Castro lies buried in the metropolitan church of St. Jago, where a magnificent tomb was erected to her memory. The royal arms and crown of Castile, and those of De Castro without a crown, are engraven on the monument. Underneath the figure of the Lady Juana, who is represented attired in royal robes and wearing a crown, is the following inscription:—*“Aqui yace Doña Juana de Castro, Reyna de Castilla, que finó en 21 de Agosto, era de 1412.”*

very startling news surprised him at Cuellar. One of the cavalleros arrived in hot haste from the frontier, announcing to him that the Conde de Trastamara and Don Fadrique had raised the standard of revolt, and that, leagued with Albuquerque, they were now preparing to enter Castile.

These, then, were the deeds of Christian knights and princes in those days of chivalry which have been so much vaunted by poets and romancists. With what a shudder must the student of the annals of these "bad old times" contemplate the spectacle of these young princes, of scarcely twenty summers, who, we have seen, treated by their king and brother with the most generous confidence, feign unbounded devotion to him, flatter his favourites, humble themselves at the feet of his mistress, encourage the weakness and irregularities of their sovereign, and a few days later, disregarding their oaths, ally themselves with the assassin of their mother against their benefactor! What a contrast between this precocious dissimulation, and the chivalric arrogance of the old minister, challenging the two Bastards to meet him in the lists before the King of Portugal! Whilst, in the retirement of his exile, Albuquerque, unjustly attacked, was making preparations for open war against the young princes, who had been ever the objects of his dislike, Don Enrique was coolly calculating the relative advantages of loyalty and treason. Undoubtedly he did not then dream of wresting the crown from his brother, but foreseeing in a civil war his personal aggrandisement, he wished, in order to render his rebellion more formidable, to obtain the support of the only man who then dared to make head against Don Pedro. Ayala, who cannot be suspected of calumniating a prince whose cause he served with his own sword, unhesitatingly asserts that the first idea of this alliance was conceived by the Conde de Trastamara.

Whatever surprise Albuquerque might have felt at such an overture as an alliance offensive and defensive against the king, when first brought to him by the young prince's confessor, the offer of the two Bastards served his plans of vengeance too well for him to hesitate to accept it with eager-

ness. An interview was immediately arranged; and to attest the sincerity of their defection, Don Enrique and Don Fadrique began with arresting the brother of Maria de Padilla, Juan de Villagera, who commanded conjointly with them the troops collected in Estremadura. After taking this decisive step, the new confederates met at Riba de Cayo, a village upon the frontier of Castile and Portugal, and there confirmed their pact by the oaths customary upon such occasions. Albuquerque immediately counted out to the two brothers a sum of 200,000 maravedis, under pretence of subsidies for their men-at-arms, and delivered to them, as pledges of his faith, several of his castles, amongst others the very one which they were charged by the king to besiege.

Don Enrique, in this first conference, explained the treason he had so darkly and deeply conceived. He proposed to dethrone his brother, or at least to raise up against him a powerful competitor, who would, he thought, persuade the King of Portugal to join in the coalition. It was the Infante Don Pedro of Portugal whom Don Enrique wished to proclaim King of Castile, and who was grandson of Don Sancho on the mother's side, and was thus one degree nearer the royal stock than Don Pedro, son of Alfonso and great-grandson of Don Sancho. At this period, when the right of succession to the throne, but recently contested in the battle-field, was not irrevocably fixed, the transmission of the crown to the eldest male of the royal lineage—a system still existing amongst Oriental nations—was allowed by the customs of the age, and moreover sanctioned by precedent. The exclusion of the Infantes de la Cerda, and the recognition of Don Sancho by the Cortes, legalized to a certain degree the pretensions of the Portuguese prince, and the confederates might fairly hope to get them admitted by a new Cortes. Such an arrangement would satisfy the pride of the nobles as well as that of the commons. It was, in fact, easy to believe that Castile, owing its present greatness to the union of several states under one sovereign, would favourably receive a pretender who brought a vast kingdom

as his portion. The project was therefore immediately adopted by Albuquerque, and transmitted to the Infante of Portugal by his favourite, Alvar de Castro. It could not, however, immediately be carried into execution, on account of the energetic resistance which it met from the reigning king, Don Alfonso IV. Not only did that monarch hasten to disclaim it, but he even recalled the prince his son from the frontier, and prohibited him from corresponding with the conspirators whose promises for a moment had seduced him. At the same time when the alliance between Albuquerque and the young princes was concluded, Queen Maria, mother of Don Pedro, precipitately quitted the Portuguese court, and anxious, no doubt, to avoid any suspicion of connivance with the rebels, returned to Castile by a circuitous route, as though seeking to avoid meeting them. If the chronicler, however, may be believed, this long journey had its charms for her. Martin Alfonso Telho, a Portuguese knight, "held her horse's bridle the whole way," and thus entirely occupied by the passion which she had inspired, she sought solitude in preference to bearing a part in the great political events which were impending.

No sooner had the tidings of his brothers' treachery reached Don Pedro—the intelligence of which was confirmed by Juan de Villagera, who had effected his escape—than, leaving for ever Doña Juana de Castro, the Castilian king hastened, on the day after his wedding, to Castrojeriz, the town he had assigned to his immediate vassals as a place of meeting. He also summoned there his two cousins, the two Infantes of Aragon, who had just returned from their visit to Portugal. The conspiracy of the Conde de Trastamara and the Master of St. Jago had, however, extended beyond the Estremadura. On hearing of the rebellion of his brother, Don Tello endeavoured to excite Biscay to revolt, and used all his efforts to raise troops from the wide domains of his wife, the heiress of the Laras. This was a fresh act of treason, proving to Don Pedro what kind of men they were whom he had loaded with favours. In the hope of creating a powerful diversion in Biscay, the king at once

married the Infante Don Juan de Aragon to Doña Isabel de Lara, second daughter of Don Juan Nuñez, and disinheriting, by his own authority, the elder of the two sisters, Don Tello's wife, he bestowed upon the Aragonese prince the title of Lord of Biscay and Lara. He thus opposed the Infantes of Aragon to his brothers, relying upon a fidelity magnificently paid for in advance. Although betrayed by his nearest kin, Don Pedro still believed in the strength of the ties of blood. This time he reposed confidence in the devotion of his cousins—he was destined to gain cruel experience before parting finally with the illusions of youth.

In the midst of warlike preparations, to which he devoted himself with unvarying activity, he learned that Doña Maria de Padilla had a second time made him a father. There is no doubt but that the lovers were reconciled, since Doña Juana was forsaken like Blanche de Bourbon. The king gave his daughter the significant name of Constanza,* in which we seem to read a promise made to Maria de Padilla. He kept it more faithfully than those oaths he had sworn before the holy altar.

The confederates did not leave him time to celebrate his daughter's birth. Every day revealed to the king the vastness of the scheme formed by his brothers, and their connexion with all the malcontents in Castile. In the north a powerful ally declared in their favour. This was Don Fernando de Castro, brother of Doña Juana, that *wife of a day* whom Don Pedro had just abandoned. Don Fernando had in Galicia numerous vassals and an almost regal influence. He was irritated by the affront done to his sister, and had moreover another motive for joining the rebels. He loved Doña Juana, natural daughter of Don Alfonso and

* Don Pedro, doubtless like our great Plantagenet Edward the First—who ordered the legend *pactum serva* to be inscribed upon his tomb at Westminster—felt how keenly his life and reign had been embittered by the faithlessness of many who had sworn allegiance to him. Doña Constanza afterwards married John of Gaunt—who in right of his wife claimed the crown of Castile. She inherited the taste of her countrymen and established an annual *Corrada de toros* at her domain at Tutbury in Staffordshire. The feast of the Assumption of the Virgin was the day appointed for this Spanish sport, which was, however, discontinued in 1778, in consequence of some accident.

Doña Leonor, and as the price of his defection, the Conde de Trastamara held out hopes of his sister's hand. Love and vengeance, the two great chivalric passions, distinguished him from the rest of the rebels, who were actuated only by ambition or cupidity. Fernando de Castro was punctilious on the score of honour, and before resorting to arms sought to satisfy his conscience. The feudal code furnished him with the means thereto. The following was the curious expedient to which he had recourse to release himself from the homage he owed to the king. He crossed the river Miño, which separates Castile from Portugal, and encamped at Monzon, upon the Portuguese territory. Every day, after hearing mass, he forded the Miño, and entering Salvatierra, the first Castilian town which meets the traveller coming from Monzon, pronounced these words in the presence of a public notary:—"I here take leave of King Don Pedro, King of Castile and Leon, and *denaturalize* myself for the following causes: first, because the said king endeavoured to kill me in a tourney at Valladolid, at the time of his marriage with Blanche de Bourbon; secondly, because he has insulted my sister, first saying that he took her for wife and queen, and then, after treating her with contumely, leaving her." After each of these declarations he received an authenticated copy from the hands of the notary, and thus provided with nine verbal processes, Fernando considered that he was absolved from his oath of allegiance. He then hastened to arm his vassals, and to recruit for soldiers, and having seized Pontferrada, he there awaited his allies, who were already in full march towards the province of Salamanca.

Albuquerque and Don Enrique, without wasting time in idle formalities, had crossed the Tagus by the bridge of Alcantara, after having devastated the entire neighbourhood of Badajos. Obligated to leave garrisons in a multitude of petty fortresses, they arrived before Ciudad Rodrigo with a body of only some four hundred horse, hoping to draw over to their side the Master of Alcantara, Perez Ponce, who had made it his place of residence. Of a truth, the Master did

not welcome them, but forgetful of the favours he had recently received from the king, he made no effort to oppose their march, and preserving a strict neutrality, was ready to take whichever side might prove most fortunate.

Albuquerque and the Conde de Trastámara, frustrated in their attempts upon Ciudad Rodrigo, pursued their march towards the north, and effected a junction with Fernando de Castro at Barrios de Salas. The conde penetrated even as far as the Asturias to incite those provinces to revolt, and recruit there for soldiers. Upon his side, too, Don Fadrique boldly urged on his course. Traversing the whole extent of La Mancha, he marched upon Segura de la Sierra, at that time a very important place, situated upon the borders of the kingdoms of Murcia and Jaén, and one of the principal commanderies of St. Jago. Thus during movement intercepted the king's communications with Andalusia, and enabled the confederates to open negotiations with the Aragonese on the one side, and with the Grenadian Moors on the other. Castilians or foreigners, Christians or Moslems, everywhere the rebels were seeking allies.

Far from suspecting the motives for the inaction of the Aragonese princes, Don Pedro, believing them fully determined to oppose the progress of Albuquerque, had directed all his attention to the southern side, and hastily approached Segura, in order to prevent that place falling into the power of Don Fadrique. Before setting out upon this expedition, he had given orders to transfer Queen Blanche from the castle of Arevalo to the Alcazar of Toledo. He feared, and not unreasonably, that a surprise might place her in the hands of the rebels, who would make use of her as a formidable instrument to serve their own purposes. The execution of this order was confided to the uncle of Maria de Padilla, Juan de Hinojosa, who had just been appointed his chamberlain. This intelligence filled all the nobility of Toledo with indignation. To deliver the queen into the hands of the uncle of the favourite was, they said, to condemn her to death. No one doubted but that the king entertained the most sinister designs against her, and the unhappy

Blanche was already regarded as a devoted victim. When Hincostrosa appeared at the gates of Toledo, conducting his fair young prisoner, and endeavouring to reassure her by lavishing upon her every outward mark of respect, all hearts were moved with pity and anger. The ladies especially—as may be imagined from the nature of the case—were highly excited, accused the men of cowardice, and, in the name of their boasted chivalry, called upon them to avenge their injured queen. The cortège entered the city in the midst of a dense multitude, now greeting the queen with acclamations, now venting their indignation in threatening cries against her escort. The Bishop of Segovia, who accompanied the prisoner, requested permission for her to enter the cathedral, in order to pray before the famous stone which, it is said, preserves the impress of the foot of the Virgin, and which is an object of veneration throughout Spain.* Hincostrosa was too courteous to refuse the request, and Blanche entered the church, the greater number of the soldiers remaining outside, surrounded by a noisy crowd, which increased every moment. Weary with a rather long attendance, and fearing a collision between the rabble and his men, Hincostrosa respectfully announced to the queen that it was time to repair to the apartments prepared for her in the Alcazar. Queen Blanche, however, then refused to leave the sanctuary. The clergy of Toledo surrounded her. The crowd had pressed into the cathedral, and Don Pedro's chamberlain being ill supported, and moreover disliking his office of jailor, did not dare to employ violence and tear the queen from her asylum. After holding long conferences with the prelates and the principal inhabitants, he consented to allow her to take up her abode within the precincts of the cathedral, until he received the king's commands. On his own part, at the head of as many Toledan cavalleros as were willing to follow him, he went to join the king at Segura,

* Los Reyes Nuevos, by Don X. Lonzano, lib. i. cap. x. It was upon this stone that the Holy Virgin placed her feet when she appeared to San Ildefonso, and presented him, according to the grave author just cited, a chasuble *de tela de cielo*, of linen from heaven.

trusting that the city, when deprived of a portion of its young nobility, would become more submissive and tranquil. He was mistaken. The queen was perpetually visited in her retreat by a number of ladies, who came to condole with her upon her sad fate and offer their services. The ladies of her suite, and more particularly her *camerara mayor*, Doña Leonor de Saldana, wife of the lord of Haro, implored the compassion of their visitors, and besought them to save the innocent princess. "The king," said Doña Leonor, "is betrayed by perfidious counsellors. The Alcazar of Toledo will be the tomb of our queen, and soon you will see the uncle of Maria de Padilla return with the executioners, who will sacrifice the princess to the hatred of an unworthy rival. Will the chivalry of Toledo permit so dastardly a crime to be consummated? Assuredly the king will one day be undeceived as to the real character of his favourites, and will then thank the faithful vassals who shall have prevented this commission of a crime."

Blanche uttered no complaint, but her tears, and the terror excited by the very name of her husband, spoke eloquently enough for her. The youth and beauty of the queen fascinated the young nobles, her gentleness and piety touched the people, all swore to protect her against her enemies. The citizens formed a faithful guard for her protection, and continually watched the episcopal palace, as if anticipating a surprise. Suddenly a report was spread that Hínestrosa had returned to Toledo. Hidalgos and artisans immediately ran to arms, the streets were barricaded, in an instant the whole city was in commotion. The alguazil mayor (Alonso Jufre Tenorio) and the alcaides were thrown into prison. The people rushed to the Alcazar, broke open its gates, and drove away the garrison. So that the prison which her husband had destined for her became her palace and her fortress. She was conducted to it in triumph.

Don Pedro, after a few unimportant skirmishes with the garrison of Segura, being apprised by Hínestrosa that the young queen had escaped from his hands, left some troops

before the place, and set out forthwith for Toledo. On his way thither, he held a chapter at Ocaña of those among the Knights of St. Jago who remained faithful, and obliged them to depose Don Fadrique, and elect in his stead Juan de Villagera, the bastard brother of Doña Maria de Padilla, although that cavallero was married, contrary to the statutes of the order. This election, illegal as it was, became nevertheless a precedent which eventually was recognised.

The insurrection at Toledo was a heavy blow to the king's cause. Upon the intelligence spreading rapidly that the first city in the kingdom was in open rebellion, a number of *ricos hombres* and knights, until then undecided as to the course they should pursue, joined the rebels. The Infantes of Aragon were the first to raise the mask, and declare themselves the allies of Albuquerque and Don Enrique, and soon after their mother, Doña Leonor, the king's aunt, joined them at Cuenca de Tamariz. In this city were assembled the greater number of the chiefs, and it was there that they concerted and sealed their alliance. Until then, each of the rebels had made war in his own name and for his individual advantage. Each had his own grievances, for which he sought redress. Albuquerque complained of the unjust usurpation of his lands. Fernando de Castro alleged the outrage done to his house. The citizens of Toledo declared that they were in arms to defend their queen. As for Don Pedro's brothers and the Infantes of Aragon, assuredly Castile had yet to learn what charges they could bring against a king who had ever been generous and kind to them. At Cuenca, under the presidency of the Queen-dowager of Aragon, the confederates chose their banner and published their manifesto. The popular sympathy, which had been so powerfully excited by the misfortunes of Blanche, convinced them that they could not do better than give her name to their cause. They therefore proclaimed themselves her protectors, and despatched a herald to the king, summoning him to dismiss his mistress, to live as a good husband with his lawful wife, and, in fine, to choose other counsellors. They were already in a position

to dictate terms to their sovereign. The troops left behind at Segura had deserted, and now accompanied Fadrique as their liberator into the capital of New Castile. Each day some noble deserted the king to join the rebels. Nearly all the northern provinces were in a state of open insurrection—Albuquerque ruling supreme in the kingdom of Leon, De Castro in Galicia, the Conde de Trastámara in the Asturias. Don Tello, after having incited Biscay to rebellion, had brought troops to the assistance of the Infantes of Aragon, who were already masters of a part of Castile. All of these had written to Queen Blanche, assuring her of their devotion, and while spreading everywhere the fever of revolt, pretended to be merely executing her orders. Altogether their forces amounted to six or seven thousand men-at-arms, without counting infantry. The king, completely disheartened by this continued series of defections, could with difficulty retain six hundred horsemen about his person.

Don Pedro's first care in this extremity was for the safety of his favourite. He hastened to conduct her and his mother, the queen dowager, to the strong castle of Tordesillas, situated in the midst of a country difficult of access, and which he trusted could offer a successful resistance to the rebels, if they had the audacity to attack it. This fortress, with the large town of Toro, and others in the vicinity of the Duero, were the only places which still recognised his authority. He was soon pursued, although at a distance, by the insurgents, who were reinforced by a fresh defection, namely by that of Don Juan de la Cerda, for even the Lara faction now abandoned the king, and made alliance with its ancient foe. La Cerda, as forgetful of the death of his father-in-law, Alonso Coronel, as the king's brothers were of that of their mother, Doña Leonor, entered into a treaty with Albuquerque. The confederates laboured unremittingly to narrow the circle with which they had surrounded the king, just as the hunters track and run down a deer. Even while driving him into his last stronghold, they frequently renewed their protestations of fidelity, but each time insisted

with greater vehemence upon the pretensions advanced in their manifesto. The Queen-dowager of Aragon was herself the bearer of terms of accommodation to the king, or rather represented to him upon what conditions he might yet preserve his crown. These were, first, that Maria de Padilla should be banished to a convent in France or Aragon, and her relatives dismissed from office; and secondly, that the king should return to his legitimate spouse, for since the insurrection at Toledo, the league affected to have taken up arms solely to avenge the wrongs of Queen Blanche. "On those terms," said Doña Leonor, "the king will find none but submissive subjects, anxious in all things to obey him." Notwithstanding his ill-fortune, Don Pedro remained inflexible. He replied haughtily that he would never treat with the confederates until they had first laid down their arms and asked forgiveness.

A letter addressed at this juncture by Don Pedro to the then Regent of Aragon is distinguished by a tone of calm determination, which is not altogether devoid of dignity, and reveals moreover some features in the character of the young king which deserve mention. The latest injury, it shows, was that of which Don Pedro was most sensible. All his anger is directed against the Infantes of Aragon. He forgets his brothers; not a single bitter word against Don Enrique escapes him; he does not name Don Fadrique, and if he mentions Don Tello, it is only in some measure to excuse him, and to attribute to traitorous counsels the part he bears in the rebellion. His energetic character is not yet soured by misfortune. So much treachery excites his indignation, but he does not yet exhibit that unrelenting hatred with which the bitter experience of the conduct of his contemporaries subsequently inspired him.

By the terms of the treaty of Atienza, the court of Aragon ought to have afforded the King of Castile assistance; but in fact, it viewed with secret pleasure the disorders of the unhappy kingdom and the impoverishment of a formidable rival. The reply was evasive, and Aragon abandoned Don Pedro to his ill-fortune.

IX.

DEATH OF ALBUQUERQUE

THE confederates, notwithstanding the superiority of their forces, dared not offer battle to Don Pedro, or besiege him in any of the places which still remained faithful to him; and whilst the greater number of the *ricos hombres*, with the exception of a few chiefs, still respected the majesty of the throne, and temporized with the more powerful towns, they did not hesitate to employ main force to reduce those of less importance. They took Medina del Campo by storm, and having previously summoned its inhabitants to open their gates, delivered the place up to pillage. They here met with an irreparable loss. The man most fitted to maintain union amongst a number of nobles animated by opposite interests, Albuquerque himself, died suddenly at Medina, a few days after the capture of that town, in the commencement of the autumn of 1354. His physician, Maestro Priolo, an Italian, who was attached to the house of the Infante Don Fernando, was suspected of having administered a subtle poison in the draught which he had prescribed for an apparently slight indisposition. This charge naturally involved the king, who was more interested than any one else in Albuquerque's death, and eventually Don Pedro justified but too well the imputation of his enemies, by making this man magnificent presents, apparently not so much as a reward for his professional skill as the payment of a crime.

Albuquerque in his last moments did not belie the firmness of his character. When at the point of death, he assembled his vassals, and made them swear to make neither peace nor truce with the king until they had obtained satisfaction for his wrongs. In imitation, perhaps, of our great Plantagenet, Edward I., he directed that his body should be carried at the head of their battalion so long as the war lasted, although unwilling to lay down his hatred and authority until

they had triumphed over his enemies. From the depth of his coffin he still seemed to preside over the councils of the league, and each time that they deliberated upon their common interests, his corpse was interrogated, and his majordomo, Cabeza de Vaca, replied in the name of his deceased master.*

A short time after the death of Albuquerque, Don Fadrique rejoined the main army of the league, bringing with him from Toledo a body of five or six hundred horsemen, and all the money found in the coffers of Don Simuel Levi, the king's treasurer, besides a considerable sum that Queen Blanche had herself delivered to him. Both parties were determined to prolong the war; the young princes because they saw the king's distress augment daily; Don Pedro because his only hope was to divide his antagonists. In fact, conferences without number were held, the caballeros of the two camps meeting each other with a courtesy which sufficiently bore witness to the indifference they felt for the quarrels of their chieftains. One day the king, being at Toro, received ambassadors from the league. Before listening to the propositions of which they were bearers, he ought, according to the etiquette of the period, to have assigned them a residence with one of the nobles of his court. This species of hospitality was then held in high estimation. Alvarez de Toledo and Jufre Tenorio disputed vehemently the privilege of lodging the hostile envoys. From words they came to blows, and each calling his friends to his aid, there ensued, even in the presence of the king, a kind of *mêlée*, in which several knights were either killed or wounded. Don Pedro, during the struggle, betrayed some partiality for Alvarez, whereupon Tenorio, who till then had served the king with devotion, considered himself aggrieved, and at once quitting Toro with all his followers, passed into the rebel camp. Such was the haughty susceptibility of the feudal nobles, ever ready to break with their sovereigns upon the most frivolous pretences. It appears that when words arose between Tenorio and Alvarez, the former, carried away by

* Ayala, p. 152.

passion, struck the latter with his knife. In the general conflict that ensued, a nephew of De Toledo was killed. "And because," says Ayala, "the king appeared to favour De Toledo, and because they had fear of the king henceforth, Juan Tenorio, the king's repostero-mayor, Men Rodriguez Tenorio, and Alfonso Jufre Tenorio, departed from the king's court and joined the confederate lords."

On such slight grounds was Don Pedro deserted in his greatest extremity by Juan Tenorio, who, like Gaveston with Edward of Caernarvon, had been rather his associate than his minister—and whom we picture to ourselves as constant a companion of the king in his nocturnal rambles through Seville as Vizier Giafar was of Haroun al Raschid in Bagdad, or Buckingham of our Charles at Madrid. Wounded pride—for we do not believe Juan guilty of the baseness of seizing an opportunity to leave a falling cause—alone prompted his defection. Nothing certain is known of him after this desertion of the king. The fate of his three brothers, all of whom fell victims to Don Pedro's vengeance, is duly recorded by Ayala. It is unlikely that Don Juan ever re-entered the king's service. He had had greater opportunities than his brethren of studying the character of his sovereign, and was well aware that Don Pedro *never forgot or forgave an injury*. Probably, like many Spanish caballeros of this period, he joined one of the Free Companies which then overran France. The civil dissensions in Portugal, and the severe character of the Infante—who, on mounting the throne two years later, made a similar law to that passed by Shakspeare's duke in "*Measure for Measure*,"—would induce the Castilian hidalgo to shun Portugal as he would a pest-house. Whether, then, our libertine acquaintance, Don Juan Tenorio, perished in a skirmish, in a midnight brawl, or in the manner poets and romancists relate, his end is involved in as much mystery as the remainder of his career. We may still, therefore, agreeably witness the exit of the Don in the last scene of "*Don Giovanni*," with our convictions undisturbed by the inexorable facts of history.

X.

TREACHERY OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER. CAPTIVITY OF
DON PEDRO.

THE inclemency of the winter of 1354-5, and scarcity of provisions, obliged the confederates to quit their position at Morales, and proceed towards Zamora. Their army defiled slowly and in good order along the ramparts of Toro, displaying a multiplicity of banners in full sight of the king, who was stationed outside the barriers with a small retinue of horsemen. The battalion of Albuquerque's vassals attracted the notice of all present. Faithful to their oath, they carried in the midst of their colours the body of their lord, which was placed in a coffin covered with cloth of gold. As they passed before the walls of Zamora, the majority of the chiefs dismounted and bore his coffin on their shoulders, as if to defy the king by thus honouring the mortal remains of his enemy. It was said that the dead as well as the living were warring against the king. As soon as the army was out of sight, Don Pedro, believing that he had now some time at his disposal, galloped with a hundred horsemen to the castle of Urueña, where he had placed his favourite, Maria de Padilla; for in the present state of affairs he avoided appearing in a large town in public with her. He left his treasure and his little army at Toro, under the command of his mother, who had remained with him ever since his return from Portugal. The unfortunate prince seemed destined to have his confidence abused. Queen Maria had for some time been holding secret correspondence with the chiefs of the league. Hardly was she apprised of her son's departure from Urueña, than she gave information of his absence to the Infantes of Aragon, and invited them to return with all speed, and promised to surrender the city to them. This was, in point of fact, concluding the war, since Toro contained the king's last resource. The leaguers did not lose

an instant. A night march brought them before the town, the gates of which were immediately opened. Don Pedro had now neither money nor provisions; his army was reduced to a hundred soldiers; his only place of refuge was a castle which could not maintain a siege of many days.

Overwhelmed by this last act of treason, and seeing himself, so to speak, betrayed to the rebels by his own mother, he held a council with the few followers who had not deserted him. These were, Don Diego de Padilla, Master of Calatrava and brother of the favourite; Juan de Hínestrosa, her uncle; and Gutier Fernandez de Toledo. To prolong the contest appeared impossible. Nearly the whole kingdom was in a state of revolt; and although a few towns had as yet deferred sending in their adherence to the league, it was doubtful whether they would receive the king if he presented himself as a fugitive before their gates. Still Padilla and Gutier Fernandez advised him to venture everything rather than place himself at the mercy of the leaguers, who, in the intoxication of their triumph, might give way to the worst excesses. Both refused to follow him to Toro; the one because he would there have to answer for the murder of Nuñez de Prado, his predecessor; the other because he feared that Don Enrique might avenge, in his own person, the death of his mother, who was assassinated in the castle of Talavera when he was governor of that place. Hínestrosa spoke last. "The king's counsellors," he said, "think only of themselves, at the time when the common safety depends upon that of their master. In the present aspect of affairs everything has become possible to the rebels. The kingdom is in their hands. They may give it to the Infante of Aragon; and thus is what we must, at all events, prevent. Let the king retain his crown upon whatever conditions may be dictated to him, and take no thought for us. His presence at Toro will perhaps overawe the rebels, divided as they are by separate views and interests. Let him endeavour to gain over a few who may render him their support against the rest. As for myself, who thus advise the king to repair to Toro, I will accompany him thither; and whatever danger

may menace the uncle of Doña Maria de Padilla, it shall never be said that he ever hesitated to follow his lord.”*

Don Pedro praised his generosity, and followed his advice. After providing as well as he could for the safety of his cherished Maria de Padilla, he set out for Toro, accompanied by Hinestrosa, Simuel Levi, his treasurer, and Fernandez Sanchez, his private chancellor. Amongst all the lords who formed the little court assembled at Urucña, these alone consented to follow him. A hundred officers or servants composed his escort, all unarmed and mounted upon mules.

The chiefs of the confederacy, on being informed of the departure of this melancholy cortège, came out to meet it, well mounted, and attired in magnificent vestures, under which they allowed their armour to appear, as though to contrast their warlike pomp with the humble retinue of the vanquished king. After having kissed his hand, they conducted him into the city with loud acclamations of joy, caracoling about him, performing *fantasias*, pursuing one another, and hurling cañas in the Moorish fashion. It is said that when Don Enrique approached his royal brother to salute him, the unhappy monarch could not restrain his tears. “May God be merciful to you !” he cried ; “for my part, I pardon you.”† The queen-mother and Doña Leonor awaited him in the monastery of San Domingo. They led him thither immediately, without parading him through the city, fearing doubtless that the people might be touched at beholding their king a prisoner. The two queens received him as if he were a wayward child returning to the paternal roof, resigned to the punishment there awaiting his disobedience. “Good nephew,” said the Queen of Aragon, “it becomes you well thus to show yourself in the midst of all the grandees of your kingdom, instead of wandering from castle to castle to escape from your lawful wife. But it is not your fault, youth as you are ; it is all through those wicked men who have corrupted you, especially one Juan de Hinestrosa, whom I see here, with Don Simuel el Levi,

* Ayala, p. 168.

† Sumario, &c., p. 64.

and others like them We will now have them removed, and will place about you men of character, who will care for your honour as well as your interests" The king immediately cried out that Juan de Hínestrosa had ever served him faithfully, and that he trusted they would treat with respect a man who came under his safeguard

These protestations were useless Those who had remained true to Don Pedro in his adversity were arrested under his very eyes Hínestrosa was placed in the hands of the Infante Don Fernando, and the Jew was committed to the safe keeping of Don Tello At the same time it was signified to Don Pedro that all the offices appertaining to the crown had been filled Don Fernando de Aragon was Grand Chancellor, and Sanchez was constrained to deliver to him forthwith the seals of the kingdom, the Infante Don Juan again became Grand Standard bearer, and the royal banners were immediately placed in his hands The dignity of Grand Comptroller of the Household was restored to Don Fernando de Castro, who for some time past had, it seems, forgotten the wrongs of his sister, Doña Juana Lastly, Don Fadrique had the office of Chamberlain, or rather that of jailor to the king Until then, these functions had never been entrusted to a personage of his rank, and in confiding them to the Master of St Jago, the leaguers showed that they thought it necessary to place their captive under strict surveillance After the king had been thus constrained to assist in the partition of his own spoils, he was separated from the ordinary officers of his household, and conducted to a palace belonging to the Bishop of Zamora, where Don Fadrique committed him to the safe keeping of Don Lope de Bendaña, that same Commander of St Jago who, a few months previously, had refused to receive the king into the castle of Segura An esquire of the Master slept every night in Don Pedro's chamber, his guards had strict orders not to lose sight of him for a single instant, and indeed, no one was admitted into his presence without permission from Don Fadrique From that day all the public employments were divided amongst the principal leaguers Every one

expected a place as a recompense, and arrogantly demanded it as his share of the spoil. Don Fernando de Castro had claimed his beforehand—it was the hand of Doña Juana, the natural daughter of King Don Alfonso and Leonor de Guzman. It was in vain that Don Pedro protested against this union. The pride of the king's brothers was perhaps as much outraged as his own by the alliance; but Don Fernando de Castro exercised so great an influence among the confederates, that it would have been dangerous to have broken faith with him. The Conde de Trastamara, as head of the family, gave his sister away, and the marriage was at once solemnized with great pomp in the cathedral of Toro. Almost immediately afterwards, and with equal magnificence, were celebrated the obsequies of Albuquerque, whose manes were now avenged and might enjoy repose after victory. The Queen-dowager of Aragon, Don Tello, and a crowd of nobles attended the funeral procession to the monastery of Espina, which had been chosen by Albuquerque himself as the place of his sepulture.

XI.

ESCAPE OF DON PEDRO.

A PRISONER in his own court, Don Pedro dissembled his wrath, whilst he secretly swore not to spare one of those who had helped to entangle him in his present toils. Despite the care taken to separate the king from those who had proved themselves sincerely attached to him, the royal captive still found means to correspond secretly with his friends. Among the confederates themselves, there was more than one who, touched with compassion, or imagining himself ill-requited for his rebellion, began to consider how he might best provide against a change of fortune and make a merit of his repentance. The commons, who had been carried away for the moment by the general revolt, now found that

they had gained nothing by overthrowing the detested favourites. Power had only passed into hands still more rapacious. As for Queen Blanche, whose name a few days before had served as a war cry, she was already forgotten by those gallant knights who had pretended to take up arms solely for her sake. The people would have liked to have seen her come forward and intercede for her husband, to have beheld her take some steps to win his love and confidence. But Blanche remained at Toledo. She was a mere child, who could only repeat what was taught her, and no one now cared to induce her to play a part. Amidst this ambitious and selfish crowd the king stood alone with a calm and haughty demeanour. Misfortune had given him dignity. The people began openly to express pity for him, to regret his stern but equable administration of justice, to excuse his past errors. Thus, hardly had the royal cause seemed irretrievably lost than it regained its ascendancy in popular opinion.

The league was rent into two factions: the one headed by the Infantes of Aragon and their mother, the other by the three Bastards and their brother-in-law, Don Fernando de Castro. The queen mother was totally incapable of governing, and moreover, no one respected her. Between Pedro and his brothers the spectre of Doña Leonor de Guzman raised, as it were, a barrier against all reconciliation. On the side of the Aragonese princes, there did not exist the same motives for hatred to estrange them from the king. They regarded with a jealous eye the growing influence of his brothers. Don Juan, especially, who was married to the second daughter of Don Juan Nuñez, coveted the rich inheritance of the Laras, possessed by Don Tello, his brother-in-law. In short, the Infantes, who had been considered as the chiefs of the league so long as a great name was needed to oppose to that of the king, were, now that peace had ensued, only viewed as foreigners trying to enrich themselves at the expense of Castile. These considerations prompted the king to turn to them as instruments capable of effecting his deliverance.

Don Pedro, meanwhile, pretending the most entire submission to his mother's will, was adroitly planning the mode of his escape. From time to time he was allowed to leave the town to enjoy the amusement of hawking, and in spite of the vigilance of his guards, the confusion inseparable from such sports enabled him to receive divers communications from his partisans, and offers from the dissatisfied nobles of the league. His treasurer, Levi, who had been liberated by Don Tello upon payment of an exorbitant ransom, had obtained for an additional sum permission to see his master, and even to accompany him on his hawking expeditions. The jewellery which Levi had found means to save, and the hidden treasures he was imagined to possess, rendered him an important personage in the secret negotiations carried on in the court of Toro. The Jew wanted neither courage nor address; he was sincerely attached to Don Pedro, and became the most active and skilful of his agents. Late in 1354, through his exertions, a treaty was concluded between the Infantes, Queen Leonor, and the imprisoned king. At the price of many a castle, many a rich domain, they engaged to take up arms against the royal brothers. First of all the king must be set at liberty. Don Pedro, taking advantage of a thick fog, left Toro very early, his falcon on his wrist, as if bound upon a hawking expedition, accompanied by Levi and his ordinary retinue, namely some two hundred horsemen. Whether his guards had been bought over, or that he had found some way of eluding them, the king was soon alone with the Jew. They took the road to Segovia, and, riding at full speed, were in a few hours beyond reach of pursuit. It is said that on this day Don Tello had the command of the royal prisoner's escort, and that, seduced by his brother's magnificent promises, he connived at Don Pedro's escape. Although this version of the story proceeds from a justly suspected source, it is probably based upon some contemporary tradition; and later, the conduct of Don Pedro with respect to Don Tello, whom he always distinguished from his other brothers, gives reason to believe that he had really received an important service at his

hands. Furthermore, the number of nobles won by the Jew's gold and Don Pedro's promises was already considerable; and the Bastards, partially informed of their intrigues, no longer knew whom to trust. Hardly, indeed, dared they venture to communicate their uneasiness to each other.

XII.

DON PEDRO REGAINS HIS AUTHORITY.

ON arriving in the Alcazar of Segovia, the king wrote to the queen-mother to ask her to restore to him the seals of his kingdom; adding threateningly, that if they were refused him, he had money and iron wherewith to fabricate others. Queen Maria did not dare to disobey. The alarm at Toro was great, for every one attributed the king's escape to treachery. A few days after his escape, Don Pedro convoked the deputies of the nobility and the people at Burgos. A great change had taken place in the public mind. The misfortunes of the king, his youth and his firmness, preposessed the assembly in his favour. The greater number of Castilians had seen with indignation the conduct of the confederates, and their short-lived government had sufficed to make that of the Padillas regretted. Thus the deputies assembled at Burgos appeared eager to accede to all the king's demands, while, in return, the commons probably obtained from him an extension of their privileges and new franchises.

Misfortunes ripen men more quickly than time. His sojourn at Toro was worth years of experience to Don Pedro. Betrayed by all his relatives, even by his own mother, he became suspicious and distrustful for the remainder of his life. He left his prison filled with hatred and contempt of a nobility which, having conquered him, had afterwards so meanly sold to him the fruits of their victory. He had also learned the power of his adversaries, and henceforth he

scrupled not to fight them with their own weapons. He now opposed treachery to treachery, artifice to artifice. He had hitherto given way to violence and impetuosity; he now learned to command his countenance, and feign forgetfulness of injuries, until the moment should arrive for obtaining revenge. Formerly he had piqued himself upon being as loyal as just; now he imagined that he was justified in pursuing any course towards his offending nobles. When men are thoroughly convinced of the goodness of their cause, they are often indifferent as to their choice of means for ensuring its success. The king soon mistook hatred for justice. The rude manners of the Middle Ages, and the education which he had received in the midst of a civil war, had hardened his heart and accustomed him to spectacles of suffering. Provided that he was obeyed and feared, he cared little to gain the love of men whom he despised. To destroy the power of the great vassals, to raise his own authority upon the ruins of feudal tyranny, such was the end which he henceforth proposed to himself, and which he pursued with unwearied perseverance.

At the moment when, by a strange revulsion in public opinion, the people were loudly declaring in favour of the king, whom lately they had so shamefully abandoned to his fate, a legate from the Pope arrived in Spain, bearing an apostolic brief which placed Castile under an interdict, and pronounced sentence of excommunication against Don Pedro, Maria de Padilla, and Juana de Castro, as well as against the abettors of their illicit connexion. The bishops of Salamanca and Avila were cited before the Holy See to answer for their conduct in sanctioning a sacrilegious marriage. The decree was fulminated at Toledo, on the 19th of January, 1355, but it does not appear to have made any alteration in the disposition of the people towards the king. On the contrary, now that he was reconciled with his subjects, it excited general indignation. Don Pedro replied to the excommunication by seizing the estates of Cardinal Gil de Albornoz, and those of a few other prelates; and returning threat for threat, he announced his intention

of confiscating the domains of those bishops who wavered between the Pope and himself

XIII.

THE MASSACRE AT TORO

THREE months had scarcely elapsed since Don Pedro had quitted Toro as a fugitive, accompanied only by a single attendant, and he was already at the head of a numerous and devoted army. Toro being too well fortified to yield to a first attack, the king marched upon Toledo on one side, whilst Don Enrique and Don Fadrique were advancing on the other. The citizens were divided between the two parties. Some declared for Don Pedro, others for the Bastards, but the majority of the inhabitants wished to remain neutral, closing their gates against both alike. Queen Blanche, in the retirement of the Alcázar, beheld with terror the approach of her husband, and probably threw her influence into the scale of the league faction. To conciliate the populace of the city, Don Pedro promised to reseat Blanche upon the throne. Don Enrique, who had previously obtained an entrance within the walls, vainly exhorted the citizens to a spirited resistance. He had barely time to effect his retreat ere the inhabitants of Toledo opened their gates to the king.

Don Pedro, now master of the town, for the Alcázar had immediately declared for him, showed himself as unrelenting as he had been at Medina del Campo. All the wounded that the enemy had left in the houses were slain. Several nobles of Toledo were sent captive to distant castles, as also Don Pedro Barroso, the Bishop of Sigüenza, whose palace was given up to pillage. All the goods of the prisoners were confiscated, and finally twenty-two burghers were publicly beheaded as abettors of the rebellion. In the number of unhappy men condemned to death was a knight, above eighty years of age. His son threw himself

at Don Pedro's feet, beseeching him to let him die in his father's stead. If Ayala may be credited, both the king and the father himself were willing to allow this horrible exchange. Yet it is recorded that Pedro, remaining unmoved, allowed both to perish.

The first orders issued by the young king had been to take possession of the Alcazar in his name, and to secure the person of the queen. He refused to see her, and as though he feared that chance might bring him into her presence, he took up his residence in a house in the city. A few days afterwards, Hinestrosa conducted the unhappy Blanche to the castle of Sigüenza, of which he had been lord ever since the lands of Bishop Barroso had been confiscated and divided amongst the king's favourites.

The following version of a Spanish ballad, by an anonymous translator, touchingly paints the sufferings of the unfortunate French princess whilst a prisoner to her husband in Sigüenza.

LAMENT OF QUEEN BLANCHE.

"En un oscuro retrete."

O'er busy town and laughing plain the sun is shining bright,
But ne'er through yon dense prison-walls may pierce his joyous light;
It is a palace high and stern, and built of dark-hued stone,
Where dwells that spotless virgin-flower, the Lady Blanche, alone;
And lofty iron gratings enhance her dungeon's gloom,
Fenced round the narrow windows of her blank and cheerless room.

Here dwells fair Blanche of Bourbon, whose sires from monarchs spring,
The guiltless and insulted bride of an inhuman king.
No gay and gilded balconies surround the young queen's bower,
No voice of friendly cheer is heard from dreary hour to hour;
Within her cell the captive sits, and mourns in trembling tone,
As though to wring compassion from those cruel walls of stone.

"How soon they fleet, those pleasures sweet, this fair, false world can offer
How quickly cloy the cup of joys her treacherous hand would proffer!
She bids us rove through myrtle groves—expect a golden morrow;
Alas! that morrow's sun shall rise, and bring us—tears and sorrow!
Thorns lurk beneath her roseate wreath, and brows by care unclouded,
Crowned by its baleful shade must fade, as though by cypress shrouded.

"Oh! measureless the wretchedness, and bitter is the pain,
That when the hour's delight is o'er, to mock our loss remain!
The misery of humbled pride—of love without return;
The oft-deceived, deceiving hope—the biting tongue of scorn;
The woe that yearns for utterance, that cannot brook restraint—
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The woe that yearns for utterance, that cannot brook restraint—
The tameless spirit whisp'ring still, 'Endure! but no complaint!'

This impudent lie seems to have deceived the sovereign pontiff, who replied by an affectionate letter, exhorting him to continue in the good way. To give greater show of truth to the falsehood, the king took care not to appear with Maria de Padilla in public. She did not follow him in his expeditions, but lived in retirement, affecting great reserve; satisfied with the reality of power, she carefully concealed all appearance of it. Thus had the precocious experience acquired in revolutions made these young people of twenty years of age adepts in hypocrisy.

At the end of January, 1356, Don Pedro having pressed forward vigorously the siege of Toro and carried the out-works, the queen-mother, the Condessa de Trastamara, and the principal chiefs hastened to shut themselves in the castle. Some attempted to escape into the country, but every outlet was guarded by the royal troops. No one gave farther orders; each man thought only of his individual safety, or rather abandoned himself to despair, not knowing what course to take. Don Pedro sent word to the queen, his mother, that she must appear in his presence. She replied by demanding a safe conduct for herself and the nobles of her train. "Let her come immediately," cried the king, impatiently; "I know what I have to do." They still hesitated to obey. Ruiz Gonzalez de Castañeda, one of the twenty leaguers present at the conference lately held at Tejadillo, had a few days before secretly requested and obtained a letter of pardon. He shows it to his companions, and presses them to surrender, assuring them that there is no cause for fear. His confidence lends them hope, the drawbridge is at last lowered, and the queen issues forth, accompanied by the Condessa de Trastamara and four of the league chiefs who had taken refuge with her. These were Martin Telho the Portuguese, Estebañez Carpentero, Master *intrus* of Calatrava, Gonzalez de Castañeda, and, lastly, Tellez Giron, who, a few months earlier, had deserted from the royal standard. Carpentero and Castañeda supported the trembling queen, one on each side. Castañeda held up the letter of amnesty unfolded. The others pressed around

the two females, and clung to their garments, as though believing them their only safeguard. All sought some courtier of distinction, some chieftain of the royal army, whose protection they might implore. In order to reach the king's presence, this lugubrious procession had to pass through a compact body of men-at-arms, who awaited them sword in hand on the other side of the moat. It was necessary to cross the drawbridge and pass between two lines of soldiers. Castañeda, then displaying the parchment and the king's seal, exclaimed that he had Don Pedro's pardon, forgetting that he had allowed the time fixed for his submission to expire. They advanced slowly amidst the hooting and howling of the crowd. The king did not appear.

At some steps from the drawbridge, an esquire of Diego de Padilla, recognising Carpentero by the insignia of Calatrava, broke through the press, and, striking him violently upon the head with his mace, laid him prostrate at the queen's feet. A few strokes of the poniard finished him. This was the signal for the massacre. In an instant, Castañeda, Martin Telho, and Tellez Giron fell pierced by a thousand blows, deluging with their blood the garments of the two women, who had already shuddered with terror. On regaining consciousness, the queen, supported in the arms of the atrocious soldiery, her feet in a pool of blood, opened her eyes, and beheld the four mutilated bodies already stripped naked. Then, despair and fury giving her strength, in a voice half choked by cries and sobs, she cursed her son, and accused him of having dishonoured her for ever. She was led away to the palace, where she was treated with the same mock respect which, in the preceding year, the leaguers had shown to their royal captive. The Conde sa de Trastámara was immediately separated from the queen, and from this moment guarded with extreme rigour. Don Pedro never deferred till the morrow the execution of his awful sentences. On the same day several robbers were seized, both in the citadel and the city, and publicly beheaded. There his vengeance stopped. Satisfied by the death of the principal chiefs, the king pardoned the obscure banditti.

whom they had misled. The city was not pillaged, nor even deprived of any of its privileges.

So sanguinary a scene must not be judged by the standard of modern opinions. The manners of the Middle Ages must be called to remembrance, not to justify this horrible massacre, but to decide whether the odium ought to fall upon the prince who commanded it, or upon the epoch in which such catastrophes were of frequent occurrence. There is no doubt that, according to the laws and customs of Castile in the fourteenth century, rebellious vassals were merely looked upon as traitors whom every faithful subject was not only permitted, but bound to kill upon discovering their treachery. These men, although several times summoned to lay down their arms and accept their lord's amnesty, had persisted in their rebellion until the moment when resistance ceased to be possible. As to Martin Telho, he was a Portuguese subject, and a vassal of the queen-mother, and therefore could not be accounted guilty of high treason; but the blow struck at him was directed against the queen-dowager herself, and it was because Don Pedro could not punish his mother that he thus acted towards her counsellor, and, according to popular belief, her lover. This act of vengeance was just, following the mode of thought prevalent in the Middle Ages, for it was his duty to avenge every stain upon the honour of his house. Two centuries later, this authorized tyranny, or domestic despotism on the part of the head of a family, still existed in Spain, and, in obedience to the laws of honour, a gentleman was bound to stab, upon the spot, any man whom he might find alone with one of his female relatives.

The political result of the massacre of Toro proved that this terrible example had made a salutary impression upon the nobility—those constant opponents of the law, those restless disturbers of public tranquillity. The leaguers yet remaining in Castile, Estremadura, and the kingdom of Leon, immediately dispersed when they heard of the loss of their chief stronghold. After a few days' siege, the town of Palenzuela, which Queen Maria had given to the Conde de

Trastámara, surrendered at discretion Don Tello, who until then had effectually maintained his independence in Biscay, now sued for mercy. Lastly, Don Enrique himself, losing all hope of protracting a struggle so unequal, besought the king to grant him a safe conduct, that he might quit Castile and pass into France, where he intended to accept the rank and pay of a captain of a free company. From the Pyrenees to the Straits of Gibraltar, Don Pedro's authority was recognised. That nobility which had lately made him their prisoner, now bowed the knee before his mighty power. The church, which had laid his kingdom under interdict, was content with a trifling reparation. Finally, notwithstanding the ruinous expenses of the war, the king found himself in possession of a considerable treasure, absolute throughout his realm, and feared by all his neighbours.

Castile was now pacified. The condition of the northern provinces no longer inspired uneasiness. Don Pedro repaired with his whole court to Seville, which had already, by its pleasant situation and the industry of its inhabitants, become the most important city of his empire. It was his residence from choice. He took pleasure in embellishing it with magnificent monuments, in giving there sumptuous entertainments and fêtes, and displaying a luxury hitherto unknown to the sovereigns of Castile. Maria de Padilla followed him to Seville, and occupied an apartment in the Alcázar. Since the termination of his misfortunes, Don Pedro had thrown aside the mask. He now treated his mistress as a queen, and the people had learned to respect his choice.

Another of these unhappy Iberian princesses now disappeared from the troubled scenes of Spanish history—Queen Maria of Portugal, Don Pedro's mother—who died at Évora, after an illness of short duration, whether brought on through grief at the murder of her favourite, or otherwise, does not clearly appear in contemporary annals. She quitted Castile a prey to the mangled passions of rage, hatred, and despair, soon after the massacre of Toro, and

had sought refuge in Portugal. She lived there some time, apparently a stranger to all political intrigues, more occupied, as it seems, in providing Martin Telho with a successor, than in disputing the authority of her son. According to public report, her days were shortened by poison. Modern writers have accused Don Pedro of having punished by a matricidal act the partiality the queen had evinced for the cause of the leaguers; but it seems unnecessary to vindicate him against an accusation which rests upon no foundation, and which is not confirmed by contemporaneous testimony. Queen Maria was too universally despised to serve as a rallying cry to the factions which tore asunder Castile. She was known to be incapable of playing a political part; and it was chance alone which had for an instant placed the destinies of the kingdom in her hands, when, during her son's absence, she delivered up Toro to the confederates. It must be from a determination to impute the most atrocious actions to Don Pedro that crimes so perfectly useless are laid to his charge. If Queen Maria's death was not natural, the most trustworthy authors have thrown the responsibility of it upon her father, the King of Portugal, who, they say, was irritated by the scandal her fresh intrigues had caused. Ayala,* when relating the fact as accredited in his time, neither pities the victim nor blames the executioner. In avenging the dishonour of his house, Alfonso of Portugal acted as king and father in perfect conformity with the law; and indeed, according to the opinions prevalent in the Middle Ages, scarcely did more than strict duty required.†

XIV.

DOÑA ALDONZA AND DOÑA MARIA CORONEL.

A RUPTURE next ensued between Castile and Aragon, through the capture of some barques carrying the Castilian

* Ayala, p. 226.

† Ayala, "Apologia del Rey Don Pedro."

flag, by the Genoese sailors of the Aragonese fleet, which had been fitted out to cruise along the sea coast against the English, and being then in the pay of the King of France. This fleet was commanded by a celebrated admiral named Francisco Perellos, a corsair by choice as well as habit, although a man of good family, and allied to the royal house of Aragón. Don Pedro had immediately despatched a messenger to Perellos, warning him that he was violating the laws of the sea, and wanting in due respect to the royal person. Perellos, the pirate, insolently replied that he was only accountable to his master the King of Aragón. Don Pedro, beside himself with passion, instantly ordered his galleys to ravage the Balearic coasts, and capture all the Catalan ships they should meet. Ayala supposes that the king was incited to these acts of violence by Maria de Padilla's relatives, who feeling their credit on the decline, thought, he says, to render themselves necessary to their master by urging him to engage in a dangerous war. Whilst the Castilian galleys were sweeping the seas, Don Pedro's ambassadors arrived at Barcelona with instructions to demand, amongst other things, the punishment of the corsairs who had injured the commerce of the Andalusian cities, the extradition of the Castilian refugees in Aragón, and that Francisco Perellos should be delivered up to the King of Castile, to receive such chastisement as he should be pleased to inflict.

Pedro IV, who was anxious to gain time, replied with moderation. Don Pedro was not a man to be easily put off. He replied by a second message still more imperious than the first. After having recapitulated his complaints with greater haughtiness than ever, he wrote thus to the King of Aragón — "Seek now another friend, I have ceased to be yours, and with my own arm will avenge the wrong that you have done my honour." Hostilities had commenced in different quarters even before this letter was received.

Diego de Padilla, with the Knights of Calatrava and the Murcian flag, entered the kingdom of Valencia at the same time that the militia of New Castile, emerging from the other side of the mountains of Albacete, laid waste the

country through which they passed with fire and sword. The undisciplined Castilian bands, hastily called to arms by their lords, ravaged the enemy's territory with that bitter animosity invariably found to exist between the inhabitants of frontier towns and their foreign neighbours. The inroads of the Castilians were speedily avenged by similar devastating forays. Through the whole frontier nothing was to be seen but conflagrations and rapine. Woe to those hamlets and towns which were destitute of walls! The warriors of the Middle Ages left only ashes to mark their track. *Væ victis!*

The Castilian nobles who had been expelled from Aragon, or rather despatched to Don Enrique, found him already in the pay of France, and on the point of leaving Paris to join that immense army which was shortly afterwards to be destroyed on the plains of Poitou by Edward of Woodstock, our gallant *Black Prince*. The King of Aragon's proposals at once changed the plans of the Conde, who willingly renounced the character of a captain of a free company, to become the leader of the Castilian malcontents. Unhesitatingly accepting the conditions offered him, he quitted France, and soon appeared upon the theatre of war with a numerous company of exiles, who were attached to his person. By the terms of the treaty which he concluded at Pina with Pedro IV., upon his entrance into Aragon he did homage to the Aragonese monarch, and engaged to serve him faithfully as his natural lord. He was in turn to be invested with all the domains belonging to the Infantes of Aragon, who were at present in the service of the King of Castile. Besides these immense possessions, which, however, must first be conquered, Don Enrique obtained immediate possession of several castles in the king's dominions, as well as the greater part of the confiscated lands formerly belonging to this prince's mother-in-law, Doña Leonor. To these magnificent gifts was added an annuity of 130,000 Barcelonese pence,* besides the pay of six hundred men-at-arms,

* 68,833 reals, about 700*l.* sterling.

and as many *genetours*,* which he was to have at his own command, at the rate of sevenpence a day each man for the first, and fivepence a day for the second. The King of Aragon also engaged never to make peace, nor even to conclude a truce with the King of Castile, without the consent of the Conde de Trastamara.

It was still winter when Don Pedro quitted Seville to take the command of his troops at Molina, whither he had summoned them from all parts. But before he set foot upon a hostile territory, a fresh defection took place, which disturbed or interrupted his schemes of conquest. During his stay at Seville, the king had appeared struck by the extraordinary beauty of Doña Aldonza, daughter of the famous Alonso Coronel, and wife of Don Alvar Perez de Guzman. The attentions of a king of three and twenty years of age, the violence of whose passions was well known, might reasonably alarm the husband of Doña Aldonza. They caused hardly less uneasiness to the relations of Maria de Padilla, whose warlike counsels, as we have already mentioned, have been attributed to their desire to remove the king from Seville. War being declared, Don Alvar received orders to set out for the Aragonese frontier with his brother-in-law, Don Juan de la Cerda. He was to command a small body of troops stationed at Seron. While there, reports injurious to his honour came to his knowledge and filled him with indignation and despair. The two brothers-in-law, persuaded that the king would take advantage of their absence to commit some act of violence, hastily quitted the post confided to their care. Don Alvar, having sent for his wife, crossed the frontier, and offered his services to the Aragonese monarch, whilst Don Juan de la Cerda boldly threw himself into the castle of Gibrleon, of which he had received the investiture by the secret treaty concluded at Toro between the leaguers and the imprisoned king. As master of this fortress and heir to the lands and clanship of Alonso Coronel, he hoped to create a powerful diversion, and

* Cavallo armato e cavallo alforrato. The former were encased in steel, the latter in leather or quilted cloth.

even to excite civil war in the heart of Andalusia. Don Pedro had rightly judged the condition of this province when, though distracted by the insurrection of Juan de la Cerda, he left it to oppose by its own force the attempted rising on the part of that audacious chieftain. La Cerda, after ravaging the environs of Gibralfaro, his headquarters, gave battle to the militia of Seville. The rebels were cut to pieces, and their chief led a prisoner to Seville, and confined in the Torre del Oro. On announcing this victory to Don Pedro, the king was requested to make known his pleasure as to what should be done with the prisoner. The answer was not long delayed. A ballastero of the guard immediately set out for Tarazona from Seville, with orders that Juan de la Cerda should be delivered up to him and put to death. About the same time his wife, Doña Maria Coronel, a young and noble lady, as celebrated for her virtue as for her rare beauty, hastened from Seville to the camp of the king, and throwing herself at his feet, besought pardon for the traitor. Don Pedro, moved by her tears, granted her letters of pardon, although uncertain whether they would be of any avail. The unhappy woman, though travelling with all possible haste, did not reach Seville until eight days after her husband's execution. Doña Maria, a widow at twenty, retired into the convent of Santa Clara, in Seville, where she took the veil. She left Santa Clara in 1374 to found the monastery of Santa Inez in the same city, where she died in the odour of sanctity.

Popular tradition in Spain, and especially in Andalusia, has preserved the name of Maria Coronel, and associated it in many a tragic romance with that of Don Pedro. By one of those errors so usual in heroic legends, which, transmitted from mouth to mouth, are continually embellished by romantic additions, this Doña Maria, widow of Don Juan de la Cerda, has been confounded with her sister Aldonza Coronel, wife of Alvar Perez de Guzman. According to a legend which the inhabitants of Seville now receive as history, Doña Maria, chaste as fair, indignantly repulsed Don Pedro's addresses. Vainly did she oppose the grating

of the convent of Santa Clara as a bulwark against the impetuous passion of the tyrant. Warned that his satellites had resolved to tear her from the altar, she caused a large hole to be hastily dug in the convent garden, in which she lay down, directing the sisters to cover her with branches and mould. But the fresh turned earth would have undoubtedly betrayed her, had not a miracle been worked most opportunely in her favour. Hardly had she descended into this species of tomb, than flowers and herbage sprung up over the grave, which could no longer be distinguished from the surrounding turf.

The king's passion, however, was only inflamed by obstacles. He suspected that the beautiful widow had defeated the vigilance of his creatures. He came himself to the convent of Santa Clara, in order to carry her off. This time it was not a miracle, but an heroic stratagem which saved the youthful matron. Detesting that fatal beauty which had exposed her to such wanton insult, she resolutely seized a vase filled with burning oil and threw it over her neck and face, then, covered with horrible burns, she presented herself before the king, and frightened him away by declaring herself tainted with leprosy. "The traces of the burning liquor," says Zúñiga, "may still be seen on her body, which has been miraculously preserved, and may well be accounted the body of a saint."* The simple historical fact follows in the wake of the marvellous tale.

Don Pedro, immediately after concluding the truce with Aragon, returned to Seville to hasten the construction and equipment of a powerful fleet. *The insults of the Corsican pirates* had made him feel acutely the inferiority of his navy, and his mind, ever occupied by bold and gigantic projects, aspired to the glory of achieving conquests upon that element where, till now, his enemy had ruled without

* Zúñiga. *Anales de Sevilla*. The people say that María Coronel pursued by Don Pedro in the suburb of Triana plunged her head into a pan in which agitanas or frying fritters. The house is still pointed out before which the incident is said to have taken place and as an incontestable proof a recent visitor was requested to remark that this house is still inhabited by gipsies who use the open street for their kitchen.

a rival. Amidst these preparations,—namely, at the commencement of the year 1358,—Doña Aldonza Coronel came to Seville, to implore, as her sister had done, the pardon of her husband, Alvar de Guzman, then a refugee in Aragon.* At first she remained with Doña Maria in the convent of Santa Clara, and for some time appeared insensible to the marks of favour lavished upon her by Don Pedro. But, vanquished at last, she voluntarily quitted the nunnery, and accepted apartments prepared for her by the king in the Torre del Oro, situate on the banks of the Guadalquivir. There she soon had an almost regal establishment, a kind of guard with knights and esquires to defend her at need. In a word, she became to all appearance the favourite mistress of the King of Castile. Ayala relates that Don Pedro, always a most munificent lover, had desired the alguazil-mayor of Seville to obey, as his own, all commands given during his absence by Doña Aldonza and transmitted by the cavalleros attached to her person. For it seems that the favourite was as invisible as an Oriental sultana. Maria de Padilla, however, still occupied the Alcazar, the royal palace in the same city. She too had her regal establishment, her court, and her guard of knights. Perhaps, in emulating the despotic rule of the Moorish princes, Don Pedro had also imbibed their taste for a plurality of mistresses, whom he thus constituted rivals in pomp, and even in power. Whilst the old and new mistress, each in her strong castle, seemed to breathe defiance, the one against the other, the frequent absences of the king, whose love of the chase drew him from Seville, sometimes for several days together, afforded opportunities for bitter conflicts between these jealous women, who then divided the court into two hostile camps.

During one of these periods of absence, Juan de Hincastrosa came to Seville on his return from a mission into Portugal, bringing a promise from Alfonso IV. to co-operate with Don Pedro, and despatch a squadron to the expedition

* What must we think of the jealousy of Don Alvar, who sent his wife to ask a favour of a king passionately in love with her?

which was preparing against Aragon. The king, who was hunting in the neighbourhood of Carmona, had just sent for Doña Aldonza. This mark of preference was immediately interpreted as the signal for the final disgrace of Maria de Padilla. Hinestrosa, her uncle, being considered as the head of her family, and hated by a great part of the court, the enemies of the Padillas, trusting in the ascendant star of Aldonza Coronel, doubtless thought to anticipate the secret wishes of her royal lover by aiming the first blow at the minister, the relative of the fallen favourite. The governor of the Torre del Oro, perhaps the accomplice or instrument of a court intrigue, and most probably at the instigation of Aldonza, showed the alguazil mayor the king's seal, and ordered him to have Juan de Hinestrosa arrested. The order was at once executed, and on the same day Diego de Padilla was likewise thrown into prison. When we see these two men, lately so powerful, fall from their high estate to a dungeon, without one voice being raised in their defence, and observe the blind obedience with which the most extraordinary orders issued in the king's name were executed, we can judge how much the Padillas were hated, and also how absolute and formidable Don Pedro had become in that kingdom, where, two years back, he had found none but rebels. But if Maria de Padilla could not prevent her lover's infidelity, it was soon discovered that she alone possessed his confidence, and that it was dangerous to provoke this indulgent favourite. The king, when informed by her of the arrest of Juan de Hinestrosa and his nephew, was fired with indignation. He hastened back to Maria de Padilla at Seville, and endeavoured to reassure her relatives by loading them with fresh honours. Dona Aldonza, who had been abruptly abandoned at Carmona, was soon obliged to go and hide her shame in the convent of Santa Clara, where, it is said, she spent the remainder of her life in penitence. It does not appear that the alguazil mayor felt the effect of the king's resentment: his fault was only an excess of obedience, and that is one which tyrants can easily forgive.

XV.

DON PEDRO'S REVENGE.

DON PEDRO, at this period of his reign, weary of plots and intrigues—like Richelieu in a subsequent age—had evidently resolved to found an absolute monarchy upon the ruins of the aristocratic power. For some time this idea had solely occupied his thoughts. The inextinguishable hatred which he bore towards the *ricos hombres* who had taken part in the league was now joined to a restless suspicion of all who surrounded him—a feeling perhaps too well justified by his melancholy experience of the faithlessness of his subjects. The treaty concluded at Pina, between the King of Aragon and Don Enrique—more especially the clause which anticipated and in some manner presumed the treason of Don Fadrique—could not long have remained unknown to him. Again, the recent defection of the Infante Don Fernando, that of Gomez Carillo, the rebellion of Don Juan de la Cerda and Alvar de Guzman, seemed to him so many evidences of a vast conspiracy directed against his authority, and perhaps his life, by enemies whom neither his favours could attach nor his severity intimidate. For a short period during the last campaign with Aragon, he had seen Don Fadrique, Don Tello, and the Infante Don Juan united under his banner. It was said that since then he had conceived the project of *destroying all three*. But the near vicinity of the Aragonese army, and the large number of devoted vassals in the suite of the young prince, had obliged him to postpone the execution of his sinister designs. He attributed the arrival of Don Tello upon the theatre of war rather to the desire of seizing a favourable opportunity to betray him, than to a sincere attachment to his person. Besides, had not Don Tello recently caused the assassination of Juan de Avendaño, a secret emissary of Don Pedro in Biscay? Had he not, as well as Don Fadrique, advised him to surrender Tarazona to the King of Aragon? How could the sons of Leonor de

Guzman, his father's favourite, be expected to wage war with each other?—how could they forget the murder of their mother—the massacre of their friends at Toro? In a word, whether his brothers were animated by generous sentiments or actuated by a guilty ambition, Don Pedro could only view them as enemies. The bitter hatred he bore them himself convinced him that he must have inspired them with a similar feeling. True, however, to his maxims of dissimulation, he carefully concealed his suspicions from his brothers, Don Fadrique especially appearing high in favour. He was entrusted with a very important command upon the frontier of Murcia, and the king had empowered him to settle the differences pending between Castile and Aragon upon the boundary question. On his side, Don Fadrique affected an entire devotion to his brother, and lost no opportunity of displaying it. He was, however, surrounded by spies, and whilst apparently ready to make any sacrifice to please the king, it was discovered that he secretly corresponded with Don Enrique and the King of Aragon. Don Pedro, still much irritated against that monarch, had resolved to break the truce and again take up arms, but he wished, before engaging in a foreign war, to put an end to the civil dissensions at home.

In pursuance of his design, he made a confidant of Don Juan, Infante of Aragon, a weak and wicked prince, for whom he felt as much contempt as aversion, but whom he regarded as a convenient tool. Moreover, it appeared to him the extreme refinement of policy to arm his enemies one against another. On the 29th of May, 1358, the king being apprised of the arrival of the Master of St Jago, whom he had just sent for from Seville, desired the Infante Don Juan and Diego Perez Sarmiento, Adelantado of Castile, to shew him in his palace at an early hour in the morning. He spent then his private cabinet, presented to them a crucifix, appeared the Gospels, and made them swear to keep as an in-resentment what he was about to disclose. Then, that is one who Infante, he spoke to him as follows —

know, and I know also, that Don Fadrique,

my brother, the Master of St. Jago, bears no more goodwill towards you than you do towards him. I have proofs that he has betrayed me, and to-day I mean to kill him. I ask your assistance, and by giving it you will render me a service. As soon as Fadrique is dead, I set off for Biscay, when I propose to treat Don Tello in a similar manner. I shall then give you his lands in Biscay, and also those of Lara; for as you are married to Doña Isabel, daughter of Don Juan Nuñez de Lara, those noble domains naturally revert to you."

The Infante, without betraying surprise at this horrible frankness, and intent only upon securing the broad lands which he had so long coveted, eagerly replied:

"Sire, I feel grateful for your confidence in thus revealing to me your secret designs. It is true that I hate the Master of St. Jago and his brothers. They also detest me on account of the love I bear to you. I am therefore pleased to hear that you have resolved to rid yourself of the Master. If you desire it, I will myself slay him."

"Cousin," returned the king, "I thank you, and pray you to do as you say."*

Perez Sarmiento, indignant at the Infante's baseness, interrupted him in a tone of reproof. "My lord," said he to Don Juan, "you may rejoice that our lord the king is about to perform an act of justice; but do you think that he has not ballasteros sufficient to despatch the Master?" These words were displeasing to Don Pedro, and he never forgave them.

A few hours after this conversation, Don Fadrique entered Seville from Jumilla. It is said, that while outside the gates, a monk, perhaps secretly commissioned by Sarmiento, warned him, in mysterious language, that a great danger threatened him; the Master, however, either did not heed his words, or did not comprehend their import. He passed quickly through the city, and entered the Alcazar with a numerous company of knights of his order and gentlemen of his house. He found the king playing at draughts with

* "*Cronica del Rey Don Pedro*," p. 238.

one of his courtiers Don Pedro, who had long since become an adept in dissimulation, received Don Fadrique with an air of frankness, and, with a smile upon his countenance presented him his hand to kiss. Then discontinuing his game, he asked Don Fadrique where he had last halted, and whether he was satisfied with his quarters in Seville. The Master replied that he had just ridden a distance of five leagues, and in his eagerness to pay his homage to the king, had not yet sought a place of residence. "Well," said Don Pedro, who saw that Don Fadrique was attended by a numerous escort, "first seek out your lodgings, and then return to me." And after having bade him farewell, he resumed his game. On quitting the king, Don Fadrique visited Maria de Padilla, who, with her daughters, occupied an apartment in the Alcazar. It was a kind of harem, fitted up after the Eastern fashion. He now dismissed his knights, and entered the apartment, accompanied only by Diego de Padilla, the Master of Calatrava, who being unacquainted with the king's plot, had come to meet him, by way of showing honour to his colleague.

The gentle and kind hearted favourite received Don Fadrique with tears in her eyes, and betrayed so much sorrow on seeing him, that he was slightly surprised, although far from suspecting the cause of the extraordinary emotion his presence excited. She only, besides the Infante and Perez Sarmiento, was privy to the king's intentions, and had vainly endeavoured to change them. After having embraced Maria's children, whom he called his nieces, the Master of St Jago descended into the court yard of the Alcazar, where he expected to find his people, but the porters had received orders to oblige them to leave the court and to close the gates. Imagining that this arrangement did not concern him, he called for his mule, upon which one of his cavalleros, named Suero Gutierrez, remarking an unusual stir throughout the castle, approached him. "My lord," he said, "the postern gate is open, leave the court. Once out of the Alcazar, you will find your mules." Whilst he was still urging him to depart, two knights of the palace

came up and informed Don Fadrique that the king had summoned him. He at once obeyed, and went towards the chamber of the king, who at that time occupied one of the buildings within the inclosure of the Alcazar, and which was called the Palace of Iron. At the entrance stood Pero Lopez de Padilla, chief of the ballasteros of the guard, with four of his men. Don Fadrique, still accompanied by the Master of Calatrava, knocked at the door. One alone of its panels opened and discovered the king, who immediately cried out—

“Pero Lopez, arrest the Master!”*

“Which of the two, sire?” demanded the officer, hesitating between Don Fadrique and Don Diego de Padilla.

“The Master of St. Jago,” returned the king, in a voice of thunder.

Immediately Pero Lopez, seizing Don Fadrique by the arm, said, “You are my prisoner.”

Don Fadrique, astounded, offered no resistance.

Then the king cried out, “Ballasteros, slay the Master of St. Jago!”

For one moment, surprise and respect for the red cross of St. James rooted the men to the spot.

Then one of the cavalleros of the palace, advancing through the door, cried, “Traitors, what are you about? Did you not hear the king command you to kill the Master?”

The ballasteros raised their maces, when Don Fadrique, vigorously throwing off the grasp of Pero Lopez, rushed into the court and endeavoured to defend himself; but the hilt of his sword, which he carried under the large cloak of his order, had got entangled in his belt, and he could not draw the blade. He ran up and down the court-yard, pursued by the ballasteros, avoiding their blows, but still unable to unsheath his sword. At last, one of the king’s guards, named Nuño Fernandez, felled Don Fadrique to the ground with a blow of his mace. His three companions followed up their comrade’s advantage. The Master was lying stretched upon the ground, bathed in his blood, when Don Pedro

* Pero Lopez, prended al Maestra.

descended into the court, seeking certain knights of St Jago, whom he had resolved should perish with their chief, but, as has been seen, whilst Don Fadrique was visiting Maria de Padilla, the porters had cleared the court of all his attendants. None remained but the Master's principal esquire, Sancho Ruiz de Villegas, who, on perceiving the king, rushed into the chamber of Maria de Padilla and seized hold of her eldest daughter in order to make her his shield against the assassins. Don Pedro, who followed him, poniard in hand, snatched the child from him, and struck the first blow, after which, one of his courtiers, a private enemy of Sancho de Villegas, finished him upon the spot. Leaving his mistress's chamber inundated with blood, the king again descended into the court and approached the Master, whom he found lying upon the earth, motionless, but still breathing. He drew his poniard and gave it to an African slave, bidding him despatch the dying man. Then, having made sure of his vengeance, he passed into a hall, a few yards distant from his brother's corpse, and sat down to dinner.

With some marked deviation from historic truth—particularly in its unjust implication of Maria de Padilla—one of Lockhart's admirable translations from "Ancient Spanish Ballads" very graphically describes this terrible scene —

ROMANCE OF DON FADRIQUE

' Yo me estaba alla en Coimbra '

~ * ~ ~ ~

"Come, brother dear, the day draws near" (twas thus bespoke the king)
 "For plenar court and knightly sport with in the listed ring"
 Alas! unhappy Master, I easy credence lent,
 Alas! for fast and faster I at his bidding went

When I set off from Coimbra and passed the bound of Spain,
 I had a goodly company of spearmen in my train,
 A gallant force a score of horse, and sturdy mules thirteen
 With joyful heart I held my course—my years were young and green

* For "Coimbra" read 'Jumilla'. It may be inferred from this error that the romance was composed during a war between Spain and Portugal.

A journey of good fifteen days within the week was done ;
I halted not, though signs I got, dark tokens many a one ;
A strong stream mastered horse and mule—I lost my poniard fine,
And left a page within the pool—a faithful page of mine.

Yet on to proud Seville I rode ; when to the gate I came,
Before me stood a man of God to warn me from the same ;
The words he spake I would not hear, his grief I would not see :
“ I seek,” said I, “ my brother dear ; I will not stop for thee.”

No lists were closed upon the sand, for royal tourney dight,
No pawing horse was seen to stand, I saw no armed knight ;
Yet aye I gave my mule the spur, and hastened through the town,
I stopped before his palace door, then gaily leapt I down.

They shut the door, my trusty score of friends were left behind ;
I would not hear their whispered fear, no harm was in my mind ;
I greeted Pedro, but he turned—I wot his look was cold ;
His brother from his knee he spurned—“ Stand off, thou Master bold !”

“ Stand off, stand off, thou traitor strong !” (’twas thus he said to me)
“ Thy time on earth shall not be long—what brings thee to my knee ?
My lady craves a new-year’s gift, and I will keep my word ;
Thy head, methinks, may serve the shift—good yeoman, draw thy sword !”

* * * * *

The Master lay upon the floor, ere well that word was said,
Then in a charger off they bore his pale and bloody head ;
They brought it to Padilla’s chair ; they bowed them on the knee ;
“ King Pedro greets thee, lady fair, this gift he sends to thee !”

She gazed upon the Master’s head, her scorn it could not scare,
And cruel were the words she said, and proud her glances were :
“ Thou now shalt pay, thou traitor base ! the debt of many a year ;
My dog shall lick that haughty face ; no more that lip shall sneer.”

She seized it by the clotted hair, and o’er the window flung ;
The mastiff smelt it in his lair, forth at her cry he sprung ;
The mastiff that had crouched so low to lick the Master’s hand,
He tossed the morsel to and fro, and licked it on the sand.

And ever as the mastiff tore his bloody teeth were shown,
With growl and snort he made his sport, and picked it to the bone ;
The baying of the beast was loud, and swiftly on the street
There gathered round a gaping crowd to see the mastiff eat.

Then out and spake King Pedro, “ What governance is this ?
The rabble rout, my gate without, torment my dogs I wis.”
Then out and spake King Pedro’s page, “ It is the Master’s head ;
The mastiff tears it in his rage—therewith they have him fed.”

Then out and spake the ancient nurse that nursed the brothers twain,
“ On thee, King Pedro, lies the curse : thy brother thou hast slain !
A thousand harlots there may be within the realm of Spain,
But where is she can give to thee thy brother back again ?”

descended into the court, seeking certain knights of St Jago, whom he had resolved should perish with their chief, but, as has been seen, whilst Don Fadrique was visiting Maria de Padilla, the porters had cleared the court of all his attendants. None remained but the Master's principal esquire, Sancho Ruiz de Villegas, who, on perceiving the king, rushed into the chamber of Maria de Padilla and seized hold of her eldest daughter in order to make her his shield against the assassins. Don Pedro, who followed him, poniard in hand, snatched the child from him, and struck the first blow, after which, one of his courtiers, a private enemy of Sancho de Villegas, finished him upon the spot. Leaving his mistress's chamber inundated with blood, the king again descended into the court and approached the Master, whom he found lying upon the earth, motionless, but still breathing. He drew his poniard and gave it to an African slave, bidding him despatch the dying man. Then, having made sure of his vengeance, he passed into a hall, a few yards distant from his brother's corpse, and sat down to dinner.

With some marked deviation from historic truth—particularly in its unjust implication of Maria de Padilla—one of Lockhart's admirable translations from "Ancient Spanish Ballads" very graphically describes this terrible scene—

ROMANCE OF DON FADRIQUE

' Yo me estaba alla en Coimbra '

I sat alone in Coimbra*—the town myself had ta'en
When came into my chamber a messenger from Spain
There was no treason in his look, an honest look he wore,
I from his hand the letter took—my brother's seal it bore

"Come, brother dear, the day draws near (twas thus bespoke the king)
'For plenar court and knightly sport with in the listed ring'
Alas! unhappy Master I easy credence lent,
Alas! for fast and faster I at his bidding went

When I set off from Coimbra and passed the bound of Spain,
I had a goodly company of spearmen in my train,
A gallant force a score of horse and sturdy mules thirteen
With joyful heart I held my course—my years were young and green

* For 'Coimbra' read 'Jumilla'. It may be inferred from this error that the romance was composed during a war between Spain and Portugal.

Lara, Don Tello's wife, was less fortunate than her husband ; she remained a prisoner in the castle of Aguilar.

A fortnight only had elapsed since Don Fadrique's death, six days since the flight of Don Tello, and already Don Pedro, although without an army, was master of the whole of Biscay. On the morning after his arrival at Bilbao, he summoned the Infante, who at once proceeded to the palace attended by two or three esquires, who were obliged by etiquette to wait at the door of the king's chamber. The Infante wore no sword, but only a poniard in his girdle. A few courtiers surrounded him, and, as if in sport, examined his weapon and carried it away. All at once a chamberlain seized him by the arm, and at the same time a ballastero, named Juan Diente, one of those who killed Don Fadrique, dealt him a heavy blow on the head from behind. Although stunned by the blow, Don Juan broke loose, and staggering forward, approached Hinestrosa, who presented the point of his sword and called out to him not to advance. Then the mace-bearers redoubled their blows, felled him to the earth, and despatched him. The square in front of the palace was crowded with people. A window is opened, and the dead body of the Infante thrown into the midst of the crowd, a voice crying out, "Biscayans, behold him who pretended to be your lord!" And the crowd thought that the king had done no more than justice, and that he knew how to defend the liberties of Biscay.

XVI.

THE DEATH OF QUEEN BLANCHE.

SCARCELY had the Infante breathed his last sigh, than Juan de Hinestrosa mounted his horse and set out for Roa, a town which the king, during his captivity at Toro, had ceded to his aunt, the Queen-dowager of Aragon. She was ignorant of her son Don Juan's death, and was living quietly

with her daughter-in-law, Doña Isabel de Lara, when Hines-trosa, having demanded the keys of the town in the king's name, presented himself before her and secured her person. The next day, Don Pedro arrived at Roa, and issued orders that the two princesses should be removed to the castle of Castrojeriz. From Roa the king repaired to Burgos, where he remained some days, whilst from the north and south his *ballasteros* brought him, suspended at their saddle-bows, the heads of the knights whom he had proscribed before quitting Seville. Don Tello had alone escaped his vengeance. It was not, however, yet sated, and as he was preparing to start for Valladolid, meditating fresh executions, he learned that the Conde de Trastamara, upon receiving news of his brother's death, had commenced hostilities in the province of Soria, and on the other hand, that the Infante Don Fernando was making incursions into the plains of Murcia. In the presence of the legate, Guy de Boulogne, who was pursuing his mission of peace, Don Pedro pronounced sentence of high treason upon Don Fernando, Enrique de Trastamara, Pedro and Gomez Carrillo, and a few other refugees, cavalleros of distinction. The king's fury was not satisfied by a vain act of formality. He must have blood, and unhappily he retained in his power hostages dear to his enemies. These were Queen Leonor, mother of Don Fernando, her daughter-in-law, Doña Isabel de Lara, wife of Don Juan de Aragon, who had been murdered at Bilbao, lastly, Doña Juana de Lara, wife of Don Tello. Leonor was the first victim. It is said that no Castilian dared to lay hands upon the sister of King Don Alfonso, some Moorish slaves were therefore ordered to despatch her. However that may be, Doña Juana ended her days shortly afterwards in a dungeon of Seville, where she is said to have been poisoned by the king's orders. Her sister Isabel, for some time a prisoner at Castrojeriz, was transferred to the castle of Xeres, where she soon had as a companion in captivity Queen Blanche, who was removed from Sigüenza thither. These two unfortunate women were doomed never to leave their prison alive.

The fate of the unfortunate French princess has been

touchingly recorded in another of the "Ancient Spanish Ballads :"—

THE DEATH OF LADYE BLANCHE.

"Doña Maria Padilla n'os mostréis tan triste vos."

"Maria de Padilla, be not thus of dismal mood,
For if I twice have wedded me, it all was for thy good ;

"But if upon Queen Blanche ye will that I some scorn should show,
For a banner to Medina my messenger shall go ;

"The work shall be of Blanche's tears, of Blanche's blood the ground ;
Such pennon shall they weave for thee, such sacrifice be found."

Then to the Lord of Ortis, that excellent baron,
He said, "Now hear me, Ynigo, forthwith for this begone."

Then answer made Don Ynigo, "Such gift I ne'er will bring,
For he that harmeth Lady Blanche doth harm my lord the king !"

Then Pedro to his chamber went, his cheek was burning red,
And to a bowman of his guard the dark command he said.

The bowman to Medina passed ; when the queen beheld him near,
"Alas !" she said, "my maidens, he brings my death, I fear."

Then said the archer, bending low, "The king's commandment take,
And see thy soul be ordered well with God that did it make :

"For lo ! thine hour is come, therefrom no refuge may there be."
Then gently spake the Lady Blanche, "My friend, I pardon thee ;

"Do what thou wilt, so be the king hath his commandment given ;
Deny me not confession—if so, forgive ye, Heaven !"

Much grieved the bowman for her tears, and for her beauty's sake,
While thus Queen Blanche of Bourbon her last complaint did make :—

"O France ! my noble country—O blood of high Bourbon !
Not eighteen years have I seen out before my life is gone.

"The king hath never known me. A virgin true I die.
Whate'er I've done, to proud Castile no treason e'er did I.

"The crown they put upon my head was a crown of blood and sighs :
God grant me soon another crown more precious in the skies !"

These words she spake, then down she knelt, and took the bowman's blow ;
Her tender neck was cut in twain, and out her blood did flow.

After the execution of these cruel orders, which excited an intense feeling of horror throughout Castile, Don Pedro quitted Almazan to take command of his fleet. His three months' cruise being attended by no signal result, the

Castilian galleys were paid off, and the king left Cartagena for the castle of Tordesillas, where Maria de Padilla was about to present him with a son.

The domestic tragedy which, whether truly or not, the above ballad relates, has left an odious stain upon the character of Don Pedro. At the time of poor Blanche de Bourbon's death in the castle of Xerez, she was only twenty-five years of age—not eighteen, as the ballad states—and had passed ten of those years as a captive. All modern authors agree with contemporary chroniclers in imputing her death to Don Pedro, while not a few affirm that in commanding it he yielded to the instigation of his mistress, Maria de Padilla. Ayala, who is more explicit, and whose authority is of more weight than the rest, names the perpetrators of the murder and the circumstances attending it. According to his account, the king first sent the fatal order to Inigo Ortiz de Estuniga, castellan of Xerez, by a certain Alfonso Martinez de Urueña, servant to the king's physician, and who had undertaken to give Blanche a poisoned draught. Ortiz having, like a true cavaliero, declared that as long as the castle was under his command he would permit no attempt to be made on the life of his sovereign, was replaced by Juan Perez de Rebolledo, a simple ballastero of the guard. The queen died immediately after having been delivered into the hands of this wretch. Such is Ayala's version. It has been adopted by the majority of Spanish historians, and there is no contemporaneous testimony that can be adduced against it.

The misfortunes of the young queen, her gentleness and her touching piety, caused her death to excite general interest. A predestined victim, she knew nothing of Spain but its prisons, in which she had so long languished, abandoned by all, neglected by her family, forgotten even by that chivalrous nobility who for a time had used her name as a rallying cry against the king's authority. Her death was imputed to Don Pedro, and not without reason, but the assertion of Ayala, convincing as it appears at first sight, is, after all, if we consider it impartially, of no more

weight than the opinion prevalent among his contemporaries. The sanguinary disposition of Don Pedro does but too well authorize the supposition of a great murder ; still, in the judgment of the historian, it should not be pronounced without serious consideration. Whatever cruelty may be attributed to the Castilian tyrant, it is impossible to deny that the bloody executions which he commanded were always dictated by the desire to punish grave offences, or by a systematic policy, the sole end of which was the humiliation of his great vassals. With regard to the unhappy Blanche, her miserable existence could not furnish him with aught to excite his thirst for vengeance, and what political interest could be forwarded by the death of one who had pined in such a state of abandonment for ten years? Shall we attribute it to the jealousy of Maria de Padilla? What had she, a queen *de facto*, to hope from her rival's murder? To place the crown upon her own head, will doubtless be the answer. But if so, how can we explain her having waited so long for the consummation of the crime which was to satisfy her utmost ambition? Again, let us remember that even the enemies of Maria de Padilla have been compelled to praise her gentleness. Never has she been reproached with making a bad use (save in legend) of her influence. Frequently did she succeed in calming the passionate outbreaks of her lover, and not a single instance can be brought forward in which she had exhibited animosity against the ephemeral rivals whom the inconstancy of Don Pedro so frequently threw in her way.

The moment of Blanche's death is precisely that in which such an event would appear perfectly useless to the despot who might have commanded it at any time. His power was at that period firmly established, the queen too entirely cut off for her name to become the signal for a revolt. The peace with Aragon and the retirement of the Conde de Trastamara had removed all cause of apprehension. Even the demands of the Sovereign Pontiff had ceased long before this time. At a period when the whole world had forgotten

Blanche, what motive could there be for shortening by violence an obscure life, which was already expiring in a dungeon?

One hypothesis—specious enough at a first glance—is, that Don Pedro, desiring to marry the Aragonese heiress, purchased his liberty by a crime. Everything, however, indicates that this alliance, originally proposed by the King of Aragon, was coldly received by Don Pedro, who was never sincerely reconciled to that prince. Moreover, for the king to receive his liberty entirely, the death of Blanche was not more necessary than that of Maria de Padilla, who for ten years had been treated as a queen and regarded by the whole court as his legitimate wife. And although Maria de Padilla's decease quickly followed that of Blanche, no writer seems to have imputed that event to Don Pedro. Finally, if the life of Blanche was terminated by poison, it was an unnecessary crime of which we should hardly find another example throughout Don Pedro's career. But why not believe that this death was natural? About the same period, the *Black Death* reappeared in Spain and devastated Andalusia. Moreover, do not ten years of captivity suffice to explain the premature end of a poor young girl, banished from her native land, separated from her kindred, bowed down by humiliation and suffering? It seems rather a matter of surprise that she should have endured her desolate and painful situation so long. Ayala, perhaps, in this instance, has become the echo of a mere popular rumour, and too readily accredited a crime which he was, at most, unable to prove.

Whilst the Castilian nobility forgot the young princess, not long ago their idol, the angelic gentleness and edifying piety of the captive had inspired the people with the most lively compassion for her misfortunes. Her jailors seeing her incessantly engaged at her devotions, regarded her as a saint, and represented her as such to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. One day that the king was hunting in the environs of Xerez, a shepherd, accosting him with that familiarity common to Andalusian peasants, said, "Sire,

God sends me to announce to you that you will one day have to render account for the treatment you pursue towards Queen Blanche; but rest assured that if you return to her, as is your duty, she will bear you a son who shall inherit your kingdom."

The king's first impression was that this man was an emissary of Blanche. He had him arrested, and gave orders that he should be confronted with the captive. She was found in her oratory, on her knees before an image, totally unaware of what was passing outside her prison walls. It was proved that the shepherd had never even seen her, and that he had only repeated, with slight exaggeration, the ordinary conversation of all the villagers. Don Pedro had once ordered a man to be burnt alive for having given similar advice; he, however, was a priest, and the king was ever ready to suspect some act of treachery in men of that order. With peasants he could be humane, and accordingly he set the shepherd at liberty.

XVII.

THE DEATH OF MARIA DE PADILLA, AND MURDER OF DON PEDRO.

MARIA DE PADILLA did not long survive Queen Blanche. She died at Seville, being carried off by a sudden disease—perhaps by that epidemic (the terrible *Black Death*) which was still raging at the commencement of the war with Grenada. The king's grief proved the sincerity of his attachment. He celebrated her obsequies in the most magnificent manner, and caused solemn services for the repose of her soul to be performed with extraordinary pomp throughout the kingdom. Maria was regretted both by the people and the nobles, for she had ever used her powerful influence with moderation. When dead, she had not a single enemy—a remarkable fact to be recorded in the annals

of favouritism No act of cruelty has ever been attributed to her counsels, and if she sometimes exercised her ascendancy over Pedro's mind, it was always to deter him from those acts of violence to which he was so often prompted by his impetuous and resentful temperament Among all the members of her family, Juan de Hincestrosa alone appears to have completely obtained his master's confidence Diego de Padilla, although in high favour, was never entrusted with the king's secret projects He was ignorant, for instance, of the snare laid for Don Fadrique, and it was not until the last moment that he was apprised of the fate designed for Gutier Fernandez We may conclude from this that the king was not governed, either directly or indirectly, by the relatives of his mistress Undoubtedly they owed the important offices they held to the influence of the favourite But they did not show themselves unworthy of their honours, and their birth entitled them to aspire to high distinction Their elevation could not shock any of the aristocratic prejudices of the age

Early in the following year (1362), peace having been made with Grenada, the king, before he dismissed a large number of *ricos hombres* and cavalleros, summoned to take part in a species of crusade against the Moors, held a general Cortes at Seville, and there, before the three assembled orders, solemnly declared that Blanche de Bourbon had not been and never could have been his legitimate spouse, he having contracted a private marriage with Maria de Padilla before the arrival of that princess The unsettled state of the kingdom had prevented him, he said, from announcing this union publicly, and he had been constrained to submit to a semblance of marriage with Blanche In support of this declaration, he named the witnesses who had been present at the solemnization of his real marriage with Maria de Padilla They were Juan de Hincestrosa, Diego de Padilla, Alonso de Mayorga, keeper of the Privy Seal, and Juan Perez de Orduña, his chaplain

The first of these three witnesses, we know, was dead, but the three others, who were present at the sitting, laid

their hands upon the Gospels and protested that the king spoke truth. The legitimacy of the children of Maria de Padilla was the natural consequence of this disclosure. Don Pedro presented to the Cortes his son Alfonso, then two years of age, declared him heir to his crown, and commanded that as such he should receive the oaths of the *ricos hombres* and the deputies from the towns. The necessity of implicit obedience had long since been instilled into the Castilians by Don Pedro; no objections were raised, and the ceremony of taking oath was gone through with the usual form and pomp. A numerous procession of ladies and knights then went to the monastery of Astudillo,* where the body of Maria de Padilla reposed, and transported it with the ceremonial customary at royal obsequies into the chapel of the Kings in the church of Santa Maria at Seville. It must not be forgotten that the Archbishop of Toledo, primate of the kingdom, preached on this occasion before the whole court, and made an apology for the king's conduct. The former archbishop, Vasco Gutierrez, had died in exile; his successor seemed to be a good courtier. The times were greatly changed. That proud nobility who, ten years earlier, aspired to rule their sovereign, and even to control his private life, now decimated by the sword, bowed their necks under the yoke, endeavouring to disarm their inflexible conqueror by servile obedience.

It is difficult at the present day to determine whether the declaration made by Don Pedro in the Cortes of Seville was sincere. On one side, the oath of the witnesses may have been dictated by interest or fear, and the king, who had found two bishops willing to pronounce a blessing upon his illicit marriage with Juana de Castro, was not likely to want parasites or courtiers ready to perjure themselves for his pleasure. Again, it seems strange that Don Pedro should have awaited the death of Blanche, and even that of Maria de Padilla, ere he made an avowal which the favourite and her relations were so interested in soliciting, and which the

* The convent of Santa Maria de Estadilla had been erected in Old Castile by Maria de Padilla herself.

entire submission of his subjects rendered perfectly safe. Lastly, this remarkable declaration might well appear inspired by a very natural desire of imitation, so immediately succeeding, as it did, the famous act of the King of Portugal, who in the preceding year had solemnly acknowledged his marriage with Inez de Castro, and caused public honours to be paid to her lifeless remains. The display of absolute authority made by one despot is thus frequently followed by another. These considerations are undoubtedly sufficient to throw suspicion on the reality of the marriage of Don Pedro with Maria de Padilla. It is, however, only fair to state other and equally specious arguments on the opposite side. An authenticated testament of the king, the original of which still exists—a testament made shortly after the session of the Cortes—repeats in the most positive terms the declaration made before that assembly. We can hardly charge with falsehood such an act, written on a solemn occasion, and, so to speak, in the presence of the dead. It must be added, that the character of Juan de Hinestrosa, as history depicts him, affords a strong probability in favour of his niece's marriage with the king. We can scarcely conceive that the knight who did not hesitate to follow his master singly when he surrendered his person to the rebels at Toro, would have prostituted his niece through motives of ambition or self interest. An apologist of Don Pedro, admitting his marriage with Maria de Padilla, attributes to conscientious scruples the extraordinary aversion which he always manifested towards the French princess: such scruples, however, cannot be attributed to Don Pedro without belying the testimony of his whole life.*

His death, some eight years after that of his beloved Maria, presents one of the most remarkable catastrophes in Spanish history. Defeated in the battle of Montiel, in La

* 'Apologia del Rey Don Pedro.' Mariana allows that Don Pedro was a spot or taint, whose character would not give credit to such testimony in any cause in which his rights of succession and the inheritance of the kingdoms of Castile and Leon were concerned?'

Mancha, by his brother Don Enrique, the pretender to his crown, and hopelessly beleaguered in the castle, Don Pedro had negotiated, as he thought successfully, with the famous Bertrand du Guesclin for his escape. On the night of the 23rd of March, 1369, ten days after the *surprise sur un pied* of Montiel, to use the picturesque expression of Froissart, Don Pedro, accompanied by Men Rodriguez, Don Fernando de Castro, and some other knights, secretly left the fortress, and repaired to the quarters of the French Adventurers, who were under the command of Du Guesclin, and in the service of Don Enrique. The king had exchanged his usual dress for a light coat of mail, and had thrown a large cloak over him. The little party had all bound cloth round the shoes of their horses to prevent the noise of hoofs being heard, and then, leading them by the bridle, descended the eminence on which the castle stood. The sentinels had received their instructions beforehand, and allowed the king to pass the line of circumvallation, or kind of loose wall which had been hastily erected round Montiel. They then led him to Du Guesclin, who, surrounded by his captains, was waiting for him on the other side of the wall. "To horse, Messire Bertrand," said the king, accosting him in a low voice; "it is time to set out." No answer was returned. This silence and the evident embarrassment of the French seemed an evil augury to Don Pedro. He made an attempt to vault into his saddle, but a man-at-arms was already holding his horse's bridle. He saw himself surrounded, and was desired to wait in a neighbouring tent. Resistance was impossible—he followed his guides.

A few minutes of mortal silence ensued. Suddenly, from amidst the circle formed around the king, there appeared a man armed at all points, his visor up. It was Don Enrique. The circle respectfully made way for him. He stood before his brother face to face. They had not seen each other for fifteen years. Don Enrique gazed searchingly at the cavalleros from Montiel, his eyes wandering from one to another. "Where, then, is this bastard," he said—"this Jew, who calls himself King of Castile?" A

French esquire pointed to Don Pedro* "There," he said, "stands your enemy." Don Enrique, still uncertain, regarded him fixedly "Yes, it is I," exclaimed Don Pedro, "I, the King of Castile All the world knows that I am the legitimate son of good King Alfonso Thou art the bastard!" Immediately Don Enrique, rejoiced at having provoked this insult, drew his dagger and struck him lightly on the face The brothers were too near each other in the narrow circle formed by the knights companions to draw their long swords They seized each other by the waist, and struggled furiously for some time without any one attempting to separate them Those around even drew back to give them room Without loosing hold, they both fell on a camp bed in a corner of the tent, but Don Pedro, who was not only taller but stronger than his brother, held Don Enrique under him He was seeking for a weapon to pierce him through, when an Aragonese cavallero, the Vizconde de Rocaberti, seizing Don Pedro by the foot, threw him on one side, so that Don Enrique, who was still clinging to his brother, found himself uppermost He picked up his poniard, and raising the king's coat of mail, plunged it again and again into his side The arms of Don Pedro ceased to clasp his enemy, and Don Enrique disengaging himself, several of his followers despatched the dying man. Amongst the knights who accompanied Don Pedro, two only, a Castilian and an Englishman, endeavoured to defend him* They were cut to pieces The others surrendered without offering resistance, and were humanely treated by the French captains Don Enrique had his brother's head cut off and sent to Seville †

* According to Froissart, the two men who drew swords for the betrayed monarch were Sir Ralph Holmes and James Rowland (Froissart, vol. 1. cap. cxxli.)

† For three days the body of Don Pedro was left unburied exposed to the public gaze, and then interred at Montiel, in a convent of Franciscan friars, twelve of whom were appointed to pray for his soul His remains were afterwards carried without any pomp to Alcocer, and there deposited in the church of San Jago, from whence, in 1446, they were, by command of King Juan II., translated to the royal monastery of San Domingo el Real, their present abiding place.

This tragic scene has formed the subject of another *romancero*, thus translated by the father-in-law of the versifier of the Spanish ballads previously given—Sir Walter Scott:—

ROMANCE OF THE DEATH OF DON PEDRO.

"Los fieros cuerpos revueltos."

Henry and King Pedro clasping,
Hold in straining arms each other;
Tugging hard, and closely grasping,
Brother proves his strength with brother.

Harmless pastime, sport fraternal,
Blends not thus their limbs in strife;
Either aims, with rage infernal,
Naked dagger, sharpened knife.

Close Don Henry grapples Pedro,
Pedro holds Don Henry strait:
Breathing, this, triumphant fury;
That, despair and mortal hate.

Sole spectator of the struggle,
Stands Don Pedro's page afar,
In the cluse who bore his bugle,
And who bore his sword in war.

Down they go in deadly wrestle,
Down upon the earth they go,
Fierce King Pedro has the vantage,
Stout Don Henry falls below.

Marking then the fatal crisis,
Up the page of Henry run,
By the waist he caught Don Pedro,
Aiding thus the fallen man.

"King to place or to depose him,
Dwelleth not in my desire,
But the duty which he owes him
To his master pays the squire."

Now Don Henry has the upmost,
Now King Pedro lies beneath,
In his heart his brother's poniard
Instant finds its bloody sheath.

Thus with mortal gasp and quiver,
While the blood in bubbles welled,
Fled the fiercest soul that ever
In a Christian bosom dwelled!

So perished Don Pedro by the hand of his brother, at the age of thirty-five years and seven months. He was of

good height, robust, and well proportioned His features were regular, his complexion clear and fresh If we may judge by his painted statue, which is still to be seen at Madrid, in the convent of the nuns of San Domingo, he had black eyes and hair, although tradition gives him blue eyes and hair of a deep red He was more than ordinarily active, and took delight in all violent exercises his abstemiousness was extraordinary, even in his country, where the excesses of the table are unknown A few hours' sleep sufficed him He spoke with facility and grace, but he never lost that slightly mincing accent peculiar to Sevillians Brought up under the burning sun of Andalucia, and surrounded with temptations from his earliest years, he loved women passionately, but with the exception of Maria de Padilla none of his mistresses obtained any influence over his mind

Three princes of the name of Pedro reigned in the Peninsula at the same time, and all three received from their contemporaries the surname of Pedro the Cruel They all had the same end in view, that of lessening the power of the great vassals, of putting an end to feudal anarchy We should grossly deceive ourselves did we imagine that these princes were in the least degree prompted by patriotic motives They had no other object than the furtherance of their own ambition Don Pedro of Castile, however, appears to have thought more of the glory, welfare, and greatness of his country, than did his namesakes Perhaps there is no monarch of that age but himself who would have said, "*Rather let my enemy triumph, than my kingdom be dismembered*"

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CHAPTER III.

AGNES SOREL AND CHARLES THE VICTORIOUS.

THE DAMOISELLE OF FROMENTEAU—AGNES SOREL'S SHARE IN THE REDINTEGRATION OF FRANCE—RELATIONS BETWEEN AGNES SOREL AND JACQUES CŒUR—CHARLES VII. RE-ENTERS PARIS WITH AGNES SOREL—THE DAUPHIN'S HATRED OF THE FAVOURITE—AGNES DIES SUDDENLY AT JUMIEGES—THE SEPARATE SERVICES RENDERED TO THE CAUSE OF CHARLES VII. BY JOAN OF ARC, AGNES SOREL, AND JACQUES CŒUR.

I.

THE DAMOISELLE OF FROMENTEAU.

THE influence of women over the government in France, whatsoever may have been their relation towards its kings, has almost always been exercised with sinister results to the monarchy; for when even by their restless and perverse activity they have not overthrown the executive, they have by their intrigues and insatiable ambition almost always discredited royalty. Whilst Germany, Russia, and England can reckon amongst the number of their sovereigns such women as the Empress Maria Theresa, the Empress Catherine, Queen Elizabeth, and Queen Anne, the page of French history shows us that from Frédégonde down to Madame du Barry, each century has had more or less to deplore the participation of female influence in affairs of state. The mysterious supremacy for good, however, which the "gentle" Agnes

Sorel exercised over the indolent though not incapable Charles VII, when, through the conquests of our gallant Harry of England and the Regent Duke of Bedford, the fortunes of France had fallen to their lowest ebb, forms certainly a notable exception

Agnes Sorel was emphatically a woman fitted to grace the best days of chivalry, and to shine in that precise period of the Middle Ages when respect and love for the sex were mingled with other noble, gentle, and generous sentiments altogether unknown in Greece among its fascinating hetærae, or shown towards the austere, high-minded, but in later times degenerate matrons of Rome

The career of the lovely *Damoiselle de Fromenteau*—one of the most beautiful women of her time, and perhaps, with the sole exception of Joan of Arc, the most remarkable—exhibits the reign of Charles VII of France under an aspect peculiarly striking as preceding that of Louis XI. French chivalry had lost its spurs in the grievous defeats of Creci, Poitiers, and Agincourt, all pitched battles fought by the English against immense odds. The preceding reigns of John and Charles VI had witnessed the masterdom of the ‘halles’ and the civil wars, so, under Charles VII was felt the domination of the great companies of the men-at-arms, of the ever ready and mercenary soldiery. Louis XI not only “set to rights,” but kept down with despotic violence, the bourgeoisie and mercantile class, yet under his selfish sway the feudal system, which had been the nerves and sinews of national defence, and the spirit of chivalry, as Sir Walter Scott remarks, by which, “as by a vivifying soul, that system was animated, began to be innovated upon and abandoned by those grosser characters, who centered their sum of happiness in procuring the personal objects on which they had fixed their own exclusive attachment.” The spirit of chivalry had in it this point of excellence, that however overstrained and fantastic many of its doctrines may appear to us, they were all founded on *generosity* and *self-denial*, of which if the earth were deprived, it would be difficult to conceive the existence of virtue among the human race

The wily and purely selfish Louis, who, when Dauphin, was the bitter and malignant enemy of his father's favourite, Agnes Sorel, showed himself equally forward in altering the principles which were wont to regulate the intercourse of the sexes. "The doctrines of chivalry had established" (says Sir Walter, and no one was better versed in the spirit of the period than he), "in theory at least, a system in which Beauty was the governing and remunerating divinity—Valour her slave, who caught his courage from her eye, and gave his life for her slightest service. It is true, the system here, as in other branches, was stretched to fantastic extravagance, and cases of scandal not unfrequently arose. Still they were generally such as those mentioned by Burke, where frailty was deprived of half its guilt by being purified from all its grossness. In Louis XI.'s practice it was far otherwise. He was a low voluptuary, seeking pleasure without sentiment, and despising the sex from whom he desired to obtain it. His mistresses were of inferior rank, as little to be compared with the elevated though faulty character of Agnes Sorel as Louis was to his heroic father, who freed France from the threatened yoke of England. In like manner, by selecting his favourites and ministers from among the dregs of the people, Louis showed the slight regard which he paid to eminent station and high birth; and although this might be not only excusable, but meritorious, where the monarch's fiat promoted obscure talent or called forth modest worth, it was very different when the king made his favourite associates of such men as Tristan l'Hermite, the chief of his Marshalsea or police; and it was evident that such a prince could no longer be, as his descendant Francis I. elegantly designated himself, 'the first gentleman in his dominions.'"

Having hastily generalized the predominant characteristics of the reigns preceding and following that of Charles the Victorious, it may be well to glance briefly at the state of France at the moment of the appearance of those two remarkable women—Joan of Arc and Agnes Sorel.

The beginning of the reign of Charles VII. was one of the most disastrous periods in the history of that country.

Never had so many calamities simultaneously befallen it. Upon the death of the unhappy Charles VI, the infant Henry VI. of England was proclaimed King of France in Paris, and the Duke of Bedford took the title of Regent. There were thus two rival Kings of France. The parliament, the provost of merchants, the ecchevins (sheriffs) of the University, were compelled to take the oath of usurpation of the English king, none were exempt from having it administered to them, even the priests and the inhabitants of the cloister were not excepted. The most powerful vassals of the King of France—the Dukes of Burgundy and Brittany—were allied to the English, carrying on the war conjointly with them. Desolation reigned on all sides. In the towns nothing was thought of save the best means of fortifying and defending them. In the open country many were the domains left wholly uncultivated, over whose surface waved briars and brushwood. Hence that popular tradition, that the “*woods had been brought into France by the English*” Shakespeare, depicting this wretched condition of once fertile France, says —

“ — all her husbandry doth lie on heaps,
Corrupting in its own fertility
Her vine, the merry cheerer of the heart,

Doth root upon, while that the coulter rusts,
That should deracinate such savagery,
The even mead that erst brought sweetly forth

Defective in their natures, grow to wildness,
Even so our houses and ourselves and children,
Have lost or do not learn, for want of time,
The sciences that should become our country,
But grow like swages—as soldiers will—
To swearing and stern looks, diffused attire,
And everything that seems unnatural” *

The conquerors hesitated not to partition among themselves towns as well as provinces. The Duke of Bedford held Anjou and Maine ; the Duke of Gloucester, Champagne ; the Earl of Salisbury, le Perche. The English further demanded that the lands bestowed upon the Church by the piety of the faithful should be given up to them ; and finally, the castles of the nobles who had remained faithful to the French king became possessed by the English barons. In order that this system of usurpation might be extended throughout the kingdom, even the English soldiers were allowed to retain possession of whatever fell into their hands. But the sum of evils under which the unhappy land groaned has yet to be told. The most desolating of all others for France was, that victory had redoubled the courage and mightily increased the power of the English, so that the armies of the invader were rendered more formidable than ever when led into battle. On the part of the king, few were the towns and fortresses now his own, and such as they were, with disheartened troops and defenders, the only force with which the French could oppose the enemy consisted of hastily levied troops, chiefly drafted from the wreck of armies depressed by constant defeat. Then it was that the disastrous battles of Crevant and Verneuil filled up the measure of brimming woe. Such, therefore, was the situation of unhappy France in the second year of Charles VII.'s reign.

Charles, whilst Dauphin of France, had espoused Marie d'Anjou, a daughter of that illustrious house which quartered the royal arms of Provence, Naples, and Sicily. Marie's father was Louis II., Duke of Anjou, and her mother Yolande, daughter of the King of Brittany. Her brother was that good-hearted but unfortunate prince, René of Anjou, poet, musician, illuminator of saints and martyrs upon vellum, and whose memory was long cherished in his native Provence. The Earls of Anjou were the last princes of that race of *trouvères* and *troubadours* whose stanzas, like those of Petrarch, formed the epic wreath of the Middle Ages. A sister of Marie of Anjou had married Francis de Montfort, Duke of Brittany, and René himself was affianced to the heiress

of the ducal house of Lorraine. It would have been impossible to find at that time a greater alliance than that of the house of Anjou. Queen Marie, therefore, must have powerfully aided the family compact of Charles VII with the great feudatories, and thus largely contributed towards his restoration. To her lofty station the young princess brought habits of useful activity, a love boundless as it was devoted to her royal husband, whom, during their bitter adversity, she presented with a promising Dauphin. No woman could have shown more un murmuring submission under the sharpest trials. No plaint against Charles was ever heard to escape her lips. "He is my lord," she was wont to say fondly, "he has a right to control my every action, and I over none." For all that, the poor king was just then very disconsolate, and abandoned by every one, although Queen Marie had brought him the support of the Tourangeaux, the alliances of Brittany and Lorraine, and all the country of the South. As active as she was intelligent, the queen had constituted herself the negotiatrice between her relatives and allies against the English domination, which she detested, as became a good Angevine. The retinue of the young queen, according to the custom of the lineage of Anjou, formed a veritable court of chivalry, incessantly engaged in tournaments and controversies of love, a reflex of which might be found in those fêtes that René, Count of Provence, invented somewhat later for the town of Aix. René's wife also was no less beautiful than prepossessing, and amongst her maids of honour shone the gentle Agnes, daughter of Jean Sorel or Soreau, Lord of Codun, equerry of the Count of Clermont, and of Catherine de Meignelac, of noble Tourangian race. Whilst in the bloom of youth Agnes had been numbered amongst the damoiselles of the Lady Isabeau of Anjou Lorraine, who had shown great affection for her, "*et l'avait norrie*," says the quaint old chronicle, "*la Reyne de Sicile,* dès sa jeunesse et si fort l'aimait qu'elle lui avait donné plusieurs biens meubles et heritage*."

* René was titular King of Sicily and the father of Margaret of Anjou

Such is the first fact recorded in the life of Agnes Sorel. Collating dates and facts, her birth may be fixed as having occurred in 1409 or 1410. Agnes must therefore have seen some sixteen or seventeen summers when she followed the Queen of Sicily to the court of Bourges. She became first known in that petty retinue as the *Damoiselle of Fromenteau*. It was at the time when the good René of Anjou lay a captive in the hands of the Duke of Burgundy, taken prisoner in the fight of Bullegnyville, and when, to while away the tedium of his captivity, he painted on glass those illuminated portraits of the dukes John and Philip. The features of Agnes have been but very imperfectly preserved to us by the limner. We may know, nevertheless, that she had a high and open brow; bright blue eyes, fringed with long lashes to their languid lids; a perfectly formed nose; a darling mouth; with neck, shoulders, and bosom of incomparable symmetry and whiteness. On coming to the poor and dispirited little court of Bourges, therefore, the *Damoiselle of Fromenteau* was in the full brilliancy of her charms. The playfulness, too, and at the same time the delicacy of her mind, were unequalled; and her conversation, says a writer of the period, so far excelled that of other women, as to cause her to be regarded as a prodigy of intelligence. Qualities less attractive than these would ordinarily have sufficed to subjugate the young *Roitelet of Bourges*, as the disinherited monarch was derisively termed. So Charles, who from his peculiar temperament was ever more devoted to pleasure than business, soon became passionately enamoured of the charming maid of honour; and in order to retain Agnes permanently in his court, he had her placed on an equal footing, as attendant upon Queen Marie, with that of her first patroness, the Duchess of Anjou. It is impossible to fix exactly the moment at which Charles first claimed the lovely damoiselle as his mistress, but we are told that Agnes resisted long and strenuously the king's overtures, and the most profound secrecy appears to have attended their furtive intercourse. The numerous favours, however, lavished upon the *Damoiselle's* relations, and her comparatively extravagant expenditure at

the French court—then the poorest in Europe—at last opened the eyes of those usually wide awake, if not envious folks, the courtiers

Poor and cheerless indeed was that same little court of Bourges. Its lack and privation of all that constitutes good cheer had come to such a pass that its king, we are told, could not always eat his fill at any single meal (*mangeait pas toujours son saoul*), not even on occasions of regal festival

Un jour que La Hire et Poton *
Le vinrent voir par festolement,
N'avait qu'une queue de mouton
Et deux poulets tant seulement

La Hire and Poton de Xaintrailles, bold and hardy gentlemen of Gascony, with Dunois,† “the young and brave,” bastard son of Louis Duke of Orleans, and Tannegui du Châtel, the Breton and former provost of Paris, who had saved the boy Dauphin's life—valiant hearts and tried lances—formed at this time the entire court of Charles VII. They brought with them, poor fellows, certes, invincible courage, but very few resources,—possessing neither castles, lands, fiefs, money, nor mails. They were simply bold adventurers, who brought nothing but their strong arms to the cause which they wished to serve. But not unfrequently in history success is found to attend the dashing and enterprising, who, without calculation or prescribed path, have left their destiny to chance, and staked their lives upon the hazard of a die. Charles VII. was reproached by the English and Burgundians for allowing himself to be domineered over by these knights errant and soldiers of fortune. How could he do otherwise? All the great vassals were in arms against him. The *Rostelet* of Bourges, therefore, invoked Dame Fortune perforce with all her fresh, invincible, and glorious legends.

Charles, although naturally brave—as proved at the siege of Montrecau, where he had scaled the wall sword in hand amongst the foremost, and performed prodigies of valour—

* Poton de Xaintrailles and Etienne Vignole, surnamed La Hire, were adventurous captains of strong companies of men at arms.

† The hero of the present national air of France—“*Parlant pour la Syrie*”

had nevertheless suffered himself to be cast down by the tide of adversity, although Queen Marie had vainly tried to rekindle in her husband's breast his former ardour for deeds of arms and military glory. It was solely due to the irresistible influence of the beauteous maid of honour that Charles at length threw off his lethargy, became aroused to a sense of his abject position, and showed himself capable of retrieving it. This remarkable change in the king's conduct is ascribed by Brantome and others entirely to the energy of Agnes Sorel, and the way of bringing it about is told as follows:—An astrologer being admitted one day to court, the king consulted him in the presence of Agnes, when she also desired to learn her future fate. The man, no doubt to flatter her, predicted that she would be possessed for a length of time of the heart of the greatest king living. Agnes seized the opportunity of this augury to rouse Charles from his apathy. Rising from her seat, the high-spirited favourite made a profound obeisance, and asked the king's permission to retire from the court of France to that of England, in order that she might there fulfil her destiny. "Sire," added she, "it is to the King of England that the prediction points, for you are about to lose your crown, and Henry of Windsor will add it to his." "These words," says Brantome, "touched the king so forcibly, that he burst into tears; and from that hour he resumed his former courage, forsook his hunting-grounds and flower-gardens, and *fit si bien par son bonheur et vaillance*, that he drove the English out of his realm." Whatever may be thought of this anecdote, it is certain that Agnes used the power she had over the king's mind to recall him to a sense of what he owed both to his people and to himself. Little fearing that the cares and dangers of war would diminish the affection of her royal lover, she resolved to arouse him from his debasing inactivity, and it seems certain that the counsels of this energetic and intelligent woman eventually caused the English to lose the fruits of their victories of Poitiers and Agincourt.

The relations between Agnes Sorel and her king were

now no longer a mystery, and where anything like vigour remained amongst the adherents of Charles—any slumbering instinct of French chivalry, it now uprose at her voice. That awakening was not confined to the centre of France, but extended itself among the entire nobility of the southern provinces. Agnes, who, as Jean Chartier tells us, was repulsed by the aspect of the grim captains of men at arms—scarred and wrinkled in the campaigns of the Civil Wars—preferred the young and gallant knights who could more generously and appropriately attach themselves to the court of her beloved Charles, their suzerain, in which court she herself had not yet relinquished ostensibly her modest position about the person of the Queen of Sicily, Duchess of Lorraine.

At this epoch of the Middle Ages, women even of the highest rank wrote very little, autograph letters of Agnes Sorel are, therefore, as might be expected, very rare. The patient research, however, of modern investigation has discovered the following letter* written by Agnes to the Provost of Chesnaye ez Bois —

“Monsieur le Prevot, I have heard and understood that certain men of La Chesnaye have been by you remanded on suspicion of having stolen certain wood from the forest of La Chesnaye, moreover, having been told that some of these men are poor and miserable persons, I wish not, Monsieur le Prevot, that the said prosecution be gone on with, and your immediate attention to this my request will be agreeable to your good mistress,

“AGNES”

By the tenor and form of this letter, it appears certain that it was as the lady of La Chesnaye, having high and low seignory, that Agnes wrote it to her own officer, and not as holding a high position at the court of Charles VII. Its wording is gentle and humane, and argues a disposition prone to pity and mercy. But, on the other hand,

* This autograph letter bears no date but may be assigned to 1430

female coquetry, covetous of finery, is conspicuous in another autograph letter addressed to a certain Mademoiselle de Bonneville:—

“To my good friend, Mademoiselle de Bonneville. Mademoiselle, my good friend, I heartily recommend me unto you. I beg that you will send by the bearer, Christophe, my grey robe lined with white, and every pair of gloves that you find in the house, the said Christophe having lost my coffer. Be pleased, moreover, to receive from him my greyhound Carpet, that you may nourish him close beside you, not permitting him to go coursing with any one; for he obeys neither whistle nor call, and would therefore be lost, the which would grieve me much. And having thus recommended him, my good friend, to your kind care, I pray God to give you his grace. Your attention to Carpet will give great pleasure, my excellent friend, to

“AGNES.”

Here we have no longer the simple chatelaine charging her bailiff to cease prosecuting the poor wretches who had stolen wood upon her domains; it indicates the great lady, secure in the love and confidence of the king. Mademoiselle de Bonneville figures as the maid-of-honour to Agnes Sorel, the form of whose letter is almost regal; it runs “I pray God,” &c. We thus clearly perceive the ascendancy the favourite had gained over Charles, alike by the energy of her character, the cogency of her language, and the beauty of her person—a signal conquest over a prince notable for fickleness of thought and intention, and, according to the chronicles of Burgundy, choosing his favourites and forsaking them with singular facility. This inconstancy, perhaps, was attributable to the peculiar position in which Charles unavoidably found himself—compelled to consult the wishes and yield to the caprices of each warrior-captain who surrounded him, whether Breton, Angevine, or Scot. The helpless king was forced to give way, sometimes to one, sometimes to another of them, according to the strength which they brought to his cause.

The little court of France had become, to a certain degree, rather that of the Queen of Sicily, and of all the house of Lorraine, of which Agnes was a vassal. Charles VII had once more gloriously unsheathed his sword, and if he did not exhibit much generalship in the conduct of the war, the qualities of gallantry and bravery could not be denied him. Everything was in the hands of the Bretons and Scots, and it was to obtain definitively the concurrence of the Scots that Charles VII affianced the Dauphin, then only five years old, to Margaret, daughter of James I, king of Scotland, who herself was but three years old. The dauphin, afterwards Louis XI, who bore a strong affection for his mother, conceived, as we have said, from earliest youth a marked dislike to Agnes Sorel. At the age of eleven, Margaret came to France, with a newly raised corps of her countrymen destined to serve the royal cause. The castles of Chinon and Tours therefore became brilliant courts of chivalry, and, whenever the paladins were released from the toils of war, gallantry, the chase, and the tournament were the order of the day. Agnes ceased not for a moment to inspire the king's every action towards the recovery of his realm — "*la pensée de France recouvrer*," to use the words of Francis I. But the strong and powerful hand which was to accomplish such restoration was that of the Duke of Burgundy. By his aid alone could Paris return to its allegiance to Charles VII.

II

AGNES SOREL'S SHARE IN THE REDINTEGRATION OF FRANCE

DURING the crusades, the minstrelsy of France attained a high degree of refinement, delicacy, and vigour. William IX of Poitou was a poet as well as a crusader, and Thibaud III of Champagne, who swayed the destinies of the kingdom under Queen Blanche while St Louis was in Palestine, distinguished himself not only by his patronage of the tune-

ful tribe, but by his own original compositions. Richard Cœur de Lion, whose language, habits, and character belonged to Normandy, was almost as clever at a ballad as at the battle-axe. But it was reserved for the immortal René d'Anjou, called by the people of Provence *le bon roy René*, to confer splendour and *éclat* on the gentle craft, during a reign of singular usefulness and popularity. He was in truth a rare personage, and well deserved to leave his memory embalmed in the recollection of his fellow-countrymen. After having fought in his youth under Joan of Arc, and subsequently in the wars of Scander Beg and Ferdinand of Aragon, he spent the latter part of his eventful life in diffusing happiness among his subjects, and making his court the centre of refined and classic enjoyment. Aix in Provence was then the seat of civilization and the haunt of the Muses. While to René are ascribed the introduction and culture of the mulberry, and the consequent development of the silk-trade along the Rhone, to his fostering care the poetry of France is also indebted for many of her best and simplest productions, the *rondeau*, the *madrigal*, the *triolet*, the *lay*, the *virelai*, and other measures equally melodious. His own ditties (chiefly church hymns) are preserved in the *Bibliothèque Impériale*, in his own handwriting, adorned by his royal pencil with sundry curious illuminations and allegorical emblems.

Though the stirring and legend-like career of Joan of Arc had inflamed the imaginations of such dare-devil captains as Dunois, Xaintrilles, and La Hire, with many other "tried lances" who shared their tents and combats, that excitation was at once feverish and transitory, and did not repair the loss incurred by Charles in the defection of his high feudatories, by which defection the recovery of his kingdom was mainly rendered hopeless. The men-at-arms of Charles VII. had been forced to raise the siege of Paris in all haste, and to transfer the seat of war against the English to the plains between Orleans and Bourges. The name of Joan had not only acquired a fatal renown on account of the cruel trial at Rouen, but her condemnation had not even proved

an unpopular act at Paris—for was it not the university of that illustrious city which commenced the procedure against Joan? All that belongs to history in the way of apology for Joan of Arc, belongs to that epoch of quietude and repose which followed the restoration of Charles VII. It was then that the king granted letters of ennoblement to her family, that her trial was revised, portraits of her multiplied, and her miracles made the subject of poems and ballads.

As during the long wars between France and England the national antipathies were naturally deep-rooted, Joan's name became a watchword and a battle cry, her trial the subject of mutual recriminations between the two nations, and one of the heaviest grievances imputed to the English. But with regard to the period of the greatest calamities of the *little King of Bourges*, it is certain that the intervention of the Maid of Orleans had little influence over the war. Joan failed to effect any change in the character of Charles VII., so far as regarded the ease and carelessness shown by him as to the fate of his own cause. The true chivalrous awakening was due to Agnes Sorel, and the best testimony to such fact is to be found in the well-known verses of Francis the First, which that gallant prince wrote beneath a portrait of her by Mademoiselle de Brissac—

“Gentille Agnès plus d’honneur tu mérites,
La cause étant de France recouvrer,
Que ce que peut dedans un cloître ouvrir
Close nonain ou bien devot hermite.”

Such, at any rate, was the tradition preserved through many generations of the noble influence which Agnes Sorel had exercised for her country's good*. Yet, although there undoubtedly was a signal revival of chivalry at that epoch, it was not wholly confined to the liberating movement which she invoked. The ultimate triumph of Charles VII. and his restoration to suzerainty were brought about by

* ‘Et certes c'estoit une des plus belles femmes que je vois oncques et fit en sa qualité beaucoup au royaume de France, elle avoient devers le roi jeunes gens d'armes et gentils compagnons dont le roi estoit bien servi’ (*Chron. of Olivier de la Marche*.) Olivier de la Marche lived at the court of Burgundy about the year 1444.

divers causes, but mainly by the exertions of Agnes Sorel, in effecting the reconciliation of Charles with his great vassals, and especially with the Duke of Burgundy.

In such reconciliation there is to be traced the origin of the new policy inaugurated by the influence of Agnes Sorel. Placing the fullest faith in the potency of love and the blind enthusiasm it is capable of inspiring, yet a long reign of favour like that of Agnes Sorel has often a general, rather than an individual, cause; and this must be sought for in the enduring friendship which the Queen of Sicily, Duchess of Lorraine, bore her—the princess who had snatched the Roitelet of Bourges from the fettering grasp of the great captains of the men-at-arms (Tannegui Duchatel, Dunois, and the rest), to redintegrate around his throne the feudal pact of Brittany, Anjou, and Burgundy; and the charming countenance of the “gentle” Agnes cast a beaming lustre over that new order of things.

III.

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN AGNES SOREL AND JACQUES CŒUR.

As soon as King Charles VII. had shaken off the yoke of the adventurer-captains who formed his council, and the great feudatories were united to his cause, the pinching distress in the castle of Chinon had been somewhat mitigated. That stronghold was no longer tenanted by a king who had no better cheer to place on its festive board before his companions-in-arms than a poor pullet and a sheep's tail. As a certain magnificence now reigned in that little court round Charles VII., the Queen of Sicily, the Duke of Bourbon, the Duke of Richemont, and Agnes Sorel, some financial resources must necessarily have supported it. Whose cunning hand, then, furnished forth so amply the royal larder and wardrobe? Here we trace the commencement of the power and influence of the king's *argentier*, the moneyer-favourite of Charles—Jacques Cœur.

In the Middle Ages, the Jew alone made money loans, on frightfully usurious terms. So soon as he scented his prey the Jew threw himself upon it with all the avidity of a vulture. Servile and abject, he crouched and grovelled in the dust, to gnaw later the flesh and drain the life blood of the humble tiller of the soil as well as that of lord and knight. At every period of financial crisis the Jew, resorted to as a last resource, paid down a certain sum as redemption money, and society was given up to him to be tortured as he listed. Like Shylock, he was "wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous," and tore the people to rags, until that same people, arousing itself drove him away like some unclean animal. The Jew exiled, as finance had somehow or other to be cared for, it was the Lombard who stepped into his shoes, less in the way of usury than in commerce generally. The appellation of Lombard was then given to all who came from the other side of the mountains—Venetians, Genoese, Pisans, and Florentines—bold and enterprising merchants who, from the time of the Crusades, went in search of the spices of the Moluccas, the cloths of Constantinople, and the tissues of Syria. Certain famous French adventurers, also, in the fourteenth century, had directly traded with the East by way of Marseilles. Several of these were at the same time goldsmiths, *argentiers*—that is to say, manipulators and lenders of money. An *argentier* was a peremptory necessity to kings and feudal seignors. The *argentier* made advances, and in exchange had ceded to him taxes, tolls, and revenues, on better conditions than had the Jews and Lombards. Such was under Charles VII. the rich merchant and *argentier* Jacques Cœur.

At this epoch the goldsmith's calling was not merely a handicraft, and the goldsmith simply a workman in the precious metals (*faber*). His calling embraced the coinage of money, the safe keeping of it, together with the assay and refining of metals, and as gold, definitively, was always a master passion, the first need of man and of states and princes, the goldsmith "lived by lending money as well as by selling plate," as worthy Master Heriot, of Lombard Street,

frankly told the young Lord Nigel when he proffered him the loan of a hundred pieces.* The goldsmith to a royal household, therefore, was its banker also, and looked upon as a man of importance, from the days of St. Eloi downwards.† One of the bad practices of those times was tampering with the coinage, and the goldsmith rendered great service in the tests obtained by his crucibles. Certain among these metallurgists were dabblers in alchemy, seekers after the *opus operum*. There was scarcely an adept throughout the Middle Ages, who, during his long vigils, had not gone mad after the philosopher's stone—like Albert the Great, Raymond de Lully, and others. A host of alchemists, both French and German, it is well known, had wasted their lives in pursuit of the art of transmuting metals.

Jacques Cœur, from an early age, had been employed in the service of the mint at Bourges. Roman art had bequeathed to the Middle Ages a certain degree of science in the stamping of coin; and the deniers of gold and silver, the angels and rose nobles of the period, have come down to us in a fine state of preservation. It was in a spirit of great intelligence, coupled with bold enterprise, that Jacques Cœur, who by his knowledge of the precious metals had aggrandized his commerce until it had extended to every kind of merchandize, like the Venetians and Genoese, bought up moneys in every quarter, at Constantinople or Venice, where the gold was so pure; and then had other coin fabricated of a lower denomination and rate. What remains, however, of the coinage of Charles VII., gold crowns, testons, and deniers, are of great purity. The profits that accrued to Jacques Cœur resulted from a transmutation that he right well understood, and which was a veritable alchemy—the melting of the pure and sterling Byzantine and Venetian coins, and from the sale of merchandize in the French markets, at the fairs of Paris, Lyons, Bourges, Toulouse, and Albi.

* "Fortunes of Nigel," vol. i. chap. iv.

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As soon as the alliance with the house of Anjou-Lorraine had consolidated the royal puissance of Charles VII, Jacques Cœur, nominated in the first instance warden of the mines and master of the mint, received the official title of *argentier du roi*, treasurer, and collector of the taxes and revenues of the royal domains. Protected by the Queen of Sicily, and the friend and devoted servant of Agnes Sorel, he procured by his credit considerable resources in aid of the royal cause, through loans contracted at Genoa, Milan, and Venice, at the hands of the Lombard merchants, pledging thereto his own fortune and credit.

A jeweller as well as goldsmith and royal treasurer, Jacques Cœur was the first who cut the diamond, which until then was left rough and dull, as may still be seen where it studs the covers of missals, and in the shrines and reliquaries of the saints. Jacques Cœur procured cunning craftsmen from Venice and Constantinople, who cut the diamond into facettes, and gave to it as well as to other precious stones that brilliancy which makes them the pride and glory of the court beauty. The first set of diamonds so cut and polished, if the chronicles are to be believed, was worn by Agnes Sorel, Jacques Cœur having presented her with a zone for the waist, and so we see her ornamented in her portrait.

Female attire in its whole range became greatly enriched by the extended commerce of this period. Agnes Sorel and Isabeau of Bavaria (queen of Charles VI) were the first to use linen for under garments, in lieu of the fine woollen stuff woven at Brussels and in the Flemish towns. The Queen of Sicily, it appears, had worn lacework and chemises of fine cloth of frieze, but henceforth, kings' daughters, the learned Benedictines* tell us, each received a couple of such linen garments in their marriage dowry, exclusive of the two hundred thousand golden crowns, but without appanage of land. The magnificence of feminine attire now consisted notably in gold brocades, manufactured at Venice.

* The authors of that surprising effort of human labour, *L'Art de versifier les dates* (Reign of Charles VII)

and Constantinople. The head-dresses of women of rank resembled tall mitres, from which depended long veils, evidently of Oriental origin. In the illuminated manuscripts of the fifteenth century, we see the noble dames and damoiselles thus adorned, riding forth to festival and pageant on stately palfreys, their delicate, high-bred faces set off charmingly by this style of head-gear, the white veil coquettishly draping their figures tightly laced in cloth-of-gold brocade. The poulaine shoe, worn very much pointed at the toe, was ornamented with precious stones—a foot-covering which somewhat later descended to the Venetian courtesan. All this sumptuousness of attire came from the East, and its importation was closely connected with the commerce of Jacques Cœur, whose material prosperity as the friend and *protégé* of Agnes Sorel, in strong contrast as it was to the miseries of the populace, appeared like wanton insult in the eyes of the destitute. The expression, “rich as Jacques Cœur,” became proverbial in their mouths; while the clerics from their pulpits denounced the enterprising merchant for his unscrupulous dealing with pagan infidels, and holding close intercourse with Turk, Jew, and fire-worshipping Persian, without any repugnance whatever. Despite this unpopularity, Jacques Cœur, the possessor of store of golden crowns and valuables of every description, did not fail to acquire broad domains, far more fertile and better timbered than those of the highest feudatory in France; among others that of Saint Fargeau with its twenty-seven dependent parishes, over which he possessed the right of exercising justice *haute et basse*. Protected and encouraged by Agnes Sorel, Jacques Cœur supplied Charles VII. with those “sinews of war,” the deniers necessary to carry on his campaigns against the English with that energy and perseverance which enabled him to bear his banner once more victoriously, and regain the ascendant throughout the wide realm of France. And thus did the *argentiers* of the Middle Ages often aid a national cause.

IV.

CHARLES VII RE ENTERS PARIS WITH AGNES SOREL

Soon after the death of the Regent Duke of Bedford, the English abandoned Paris, and the banner of the *fleurs de lys* was again hoisted on the towers of that Bastile where that of the English lions had of late so proudly waved. The news of the surrender of Paris found Charles still lingering at Bourges or Chinon, apparently caring very little about returning to his capital. For the tidings of what had been going on there were anything but agreeable to him—all sorts of concessions having been made since he had been driven out of his good city to its bourgeoisie and populace. The parliament, devoted to Henry VI during the siege of Paris by the English, had been confirmed in its functions, although there had been a royal parliament summoned to meet at Poitiers, near its legitimate king. Averse, therefore, as Charles was at this moment to re enter his capital, the Constable wrote word to King Charles VII that his presence was indispensable to the good governance of Paris and France. Agnes Sorel had just succeeded in persuading her royal lover to besiege Montereau, an important position which would help to unite the south to the centre of the monarchy. Montereau taken, the king directed his march upon Melun and Fontainebleau, then leaving the forest of Senart on his left, he moved upon Vincennes, Bagnolet and Pantin, avoiding a direct march upon Paris.

On the 12th of November, 1437, Charles the Victorious slept at Saint Denis, beneath the roof of that venerable abbey which so lately had given a regal asylum to the boy king, Henry VI of England, on the occasion of his solemn entry into Paris. On the morrow, Charles VII repaired to the chapel of St Denis, whither the provost of the merchants, and the sheriffs with their bands of cross bow men, hastened to receive him. There was a repetition of the same ceremonies and festivities which had welcomed the English King Henry,

mob, exclaimed in a moment of anguish and vexation, "The Parisians are nothing less than villains. Had I known that they would have done me no more honour, I would never have set foot in their city"* Agnes Sorel was naturally impressed with the consciousness of what she had done in arousing the king from his apathy and urging him on the path that led to victory over his foes, and the ultimate recovery of his kingdom. The restoration of Charles, however, was not desired by the Parisians, and therefore all who had aided in its accomplishment were unpopular with them. It will be remembered also with what savage fury they had persecuted Joan of Arc, the accusation against her having emanated from Paris.

Great allowance, too, ought to be made for these malignant mutterings of the lower orders of Paris, provoked as they were by the sight of so much luxury and riches brought into sudden contrast with the bitter misery they were then enduring. The winter had been unusually severe there had been one hundred and thirty-three days of frost, so hard that the Seine was frozen to such a thickness that carriages passed over it as on dry land. A famine was the result, accompanied by those contagious maladies generated by poverty and want. The Chronicle of Saint-Denis records that the very wolves had made their way into the streets, and had devoured the living and disinterred the dead, even in the cemetery of Saint-Innocents†. A royal charter of Charles granted a reward of seventeen sols tournois to anyone, whether archer or citizen, who brought a wolf's head. The contrast therefore, between such overwhelming distress and the unrestrained luxury displayed in the festivals held at the palaces of the Tournelles and the old Louvre was too abrupt and shocking.

It was at this period that Agnes Sorel became known by the epithet of the *Dame de Beauté*. This title, which accorded so well with her personal graces, was given her on her acquiring the pleasant manor of *Beauté sur-Marne*, erected

* Jean Chartier

† Chronique de Saint Denis, ad ann. 1437-38

by King Charles V., and whose charms had been already celebrated by Eustache Deschamps in one of his ballads.*

“Sur tous les lieux plaisans et agréables
Que l'on pourrait en ce monde trouver
Edifié de manoirs convenables,
Gais et jolis pour voir et demourer
Joyeusement, puis devant vous prouver
Que c'est à la fin du bois
De Vincennes que fit faire le roi
Charles que Dieu donne paix, joie et santé,
Son fils aîné dauphin de Viennois
Donna le nom à ce lieu de *Beauté*.

Et c'est bon droit, car moult est delectable ;
L'on y oit le rossignol chanter,
Marne l'enceint, les hauts bois profitables
Couvrent les daims,
Des oiselets ouïr la douce voix
Dans la saison de printemps et d'été
Où gentil mai qui est si noble mois
Donna ce nom à ce lieu de *Beauté*.

Les prés ençoignent les jardins delectables,
Les beaux preaulx, fontaine belle et clere,
Vignes aussi et les prés arables,
Moulins tournans, beaux plains à regarder
Et beaux viviers pour les poissons
Où l'on peut se retraire en sureté,
Pour tous les points le beau prince courtois
Donna ce nom à ce lieu de *Beauté*.”

This was that same delightful manor of Beauté which Charles VII. gave, with all its dependencies, to Agnes Sorel, who took thereafter the name of Dame de Beauté. It was thus she was designated in contemporary ballads, in *cours plénières*, and thus she signed herself in historic documents.

To the chateau of Beauté, Charles VII. often repaired to recover fresh courage and firmness wherewith to confront the vexations and discouragements attendant upon his restoration. The king held Paris, but the English still possessed Normandy, Guyenne, and all Gascony. At ten leagues from the capital the lion standard waved in all its pride, and Pontoise was the head-quarters of the English. Great disorder existed in the ranks of Charles's armies ; to which were added the troubles of the Jacquerie—those sanguinary tumults raised by

* No poet has more fully described the manners of the days of chivalry and deeds of arms in wars and tournaments.

the starving peasants and serfs—during which the captains of the great companies of men-at-arms aspired to recover their old domination over the councils of Charles VII. It was Agnes Sorel who again restored the faltering king to all his pristine energy. As the taxes were tardily collected, and a parliament convoked at Orleans having granted nothing save on very hard conditions, Agnes Sorel induced her friend Jacques Cœur, the financier, to make heavy advances to the extent of ten million crowns, in order to recover Normandy by force of arms.

The definitive triumph of the French king in this war depended upon the taking of Pontoise, occupied by the English under the brave Talbot. Charles rallied round him the flower of his chivalry, Saint Paul, La Hire, Xaintrailles and Chabannes. Agnes Sorel visited the camp with the same mission, that of rousing her king and lover to deeds of arms and persevering conduct of the campaign. The siege of Pontoise proved a long one, and at it were performed some of the noblest and most doughty feats of chivalry on record—combats of every sort, small and great, hand to-hand, with lance, sword, and mace. For the decaying spirit of chivalry was awakened and ennobled once more under the merciless grasp of grim visaged War.

V.

THE DAUPHIN LOUIS'S HATRED OF THE FAVOURITE

THE most persevering of the enemies of Agnes Sorel was the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XI. Betrothed, when five years old, to Margaret of Scotland, during the most trying period of Charles VII's difficulties, he had welcomed with deference his child bride, who was by nature of a gentle, poetic, and melancholy temperament. The Dauphin himself was well read for that rude age, and Margaret, a veritable pearl in the court of Charles VII, loved passionately the old

the *trouvères* and *troubadours*. Carried away by the living spirit of certain romantic verses of Alain, the story runs that finding the poet asleep one day, the corridors of the castle of Chinon, she imprinted on his lips in order that she might be the better of the beauties of his poesy—a freak certainly of enthusiasm, which did not at all coincide with the Dauphin's ideas of the dignity and propriety becoming—restless fault-finder as he habitually was.

At the time when Louis first figured amongst the scenes in which his youth was mainly passed, the Dauphin had borne himself as a worthy and intrepid knight. In his father's footsteps, he had fought bravely in several sieges, and meanwhile had insidiously made himself almost all the malcontents whom the novel and liberal favour accorded to Agnes Sorel by the king had

Subsequent to the entrance of Charles VII. into France, an insurrection had taken place amongst numerous lords who had been joined by serfs and peasants in the *jacquerie*, as it was then called, on account of the revolt of the Flemings, who had been stirred up by John Huss of Prague. Under the influence of Agnes Sorel, Charles VII. had combated this *praguerie*, seconded by the ranks of the bands of men-at-arms. It rarely happens that a change in military organization—the transition from disorder to order—does not produce these kind of rebellions. The Dauphin, for a brief interval, himself at the head of the *jacquerie*, made his forced submission, but never forgave Sorel for having set his father in arms against him. Agnes was allied in the closest friendship with Margaret of Scotland, whose chivalrous and enthusiastic spirit lent sympathy from the Dauphin, though thoroughly disliked by the gentle *Dame de Beauté*. Margaret of Scotland was unjustly suspected by the Dauphin of having be-

Some of the poetry of Alain Chartier had specially attracted the attention of Margaret of Scotland—the *Belle Dame sans Merci* and the *Demandes*. Both are to be found in the rare edition of Galliot Dupré, Paris, 1611. The poet Alain must not be confounded with the chronicler Jean

trayed his honour, died in her twentieth year, whilst uttering these melancholy words

“Fi! de la vie, qu'on ne m'en parle plus.” *

The Dauphin, having recovered his freedom on the suppression of the *praguerie*, appeared to be reconciled with Agnes Sorel, and served with courage and fidelity his king and father in the war against the English. Those who have represented Louis XI from his first entrance upon his public career as a coward, with more of the citizen about him than the prince, and shunning warlike pursuits, have not studied the early portion of his life. He figured as commander of one of the bravest of the troops of men-at arms. At the sieges of Pontoise, Dieppe, and La Reole he was seen to display the most brilliant valour against the English, but he no sooner won his spurs as a knight, than he sought to make partisans and inaugurate devoted friendships. After that glorious campaign that brought the French army to the gates of Paris, the Dauphin returned thither also, whilst Charles VII resided in his capital, dividing his time between the Chateau des Tournelles and the Manor of Beauté—the favourite abode of Agnes Sorel. The chronicles of the time tell us that she presented the king with three children—all daughters, and that such public and scandalous *liaison* was looked upon with great resignation by Queen Marie, who nothing less than idolized her royal husband. But they also affirm that the Dauphin never ceased to manifest a just indignation against Agnes on that score. Was that indignation prompted by his tender love for an outraged mother? Or was it because Agnes Sorel held in her hand his father's sceptre, and grasped it firmly for the repression of every revolt, and that in so doing she had divined the Dauphin's impatience to bind his brow with the crown? However that may be, the chroniclers relate that on one occasion the Dauphin was moved to such a pitch of wrath that he gave the fair *Dame de Beaute* a box on the ears, who thereupon withdrew from court to shut herself up in the chateau of

* “Out upon life! speak no more to me of it. —*Jean Chartier*

Loches, in Touraine. It was not by mere chance that the kings of France have chosen Loches and Chinon for their residence—delightful retreats which had witnessed the first feeling, the earliest enthusiasm for glory in the breasts of Charles VII. and Agnes Sorel.

VI.

AGNES DIES SUDDENLY AT JUMIÈGES.

AT Loches, then, Agnes Sorel lived for five years in tranquillity, without being once seen at court, though still maintaining the most intimate relations with Charles the Victorious, who made several journeys into Touraine to see her. Towards the end of 1449, Queen Marie, who had never forgotten the noble advice Agnes had given the king, invited her to return to court, and the high-minded favourite reappeared there in obedience to the royal wish. After the fall of Rouen, and the entire repulsion of the English from Normandy, Charles passed the winter months at the abbey of Jumièges; and thither, undeterred by rigour of weather or other perils of the road, Agnes hurriedly wended her way early in 1450. Ever anxious for the safety and welfare of the king, the object of her sudden journey was to warn him of a conspiracy against his person. This last act of devotedness to Charles in all probability cost the *Dame de Beauté* her life. For there at Jumièges a grievous malady, attacking her in the bloom of womanhood, put an end to her good offices and eventful existence on the 9th of February, 1450. Some of her contemporaries believed that she had been poisoned by command of the Dauphin, the crafty and cold-hearted Louis—who, it will be remembered, was afterwards accused of taking his father's life by the agency of poison; others believed by the hand of Jacques Cœur, the king's treasurer, whom Agnes had named executor to her will.

Historians widely differ in their opinions as to the character

of this royal favourite. While some accuse her of having wasted the public finances in scandalous expenditure, others attribute to her the glory of having saved her country. This, however, may be safely affirmed of the "gentle" Agnes, that she never abused her power, that she was sincerely attached to the king, and that she so conducted herself, whilst in a very invidious position, as to preserve until her death the friendship and affection of the queen. And lastly, though the *Dame de Beauté* died suddenly in the prime of life, she had lived to see the dream of Norman-English domination in France finally overthrown, and to know that through her patriotic advice and energetic prompting her royal lover—hopelessly depressed as he seemed at one period of his fallen fortunes—fairly earned at last the proud epithet of Charles *the Victorious*, and had, in spite of almost unexampled reverses, lived to become one of the most powerful sovereigns in Europe.

Curious is it to contemplate the two lives, side by side—those of the *Dame de Beauté* and the shepherd-girl of Domrèmy! Both women eminently gifted, mentally and corporeally—both intimately connected with the same royal personage, only in a totally different manner, neither of them born in high station, the one renouncing all her feminine attributes to serve her king's and her country's cause, the other, through the depth of her affection for the man, sacrificing all a woman holds most dear, but, from the moment of her lapse, devoting all her influence and all her time to doing good, and showing from her utter indifference to the luxuries, the gorgeous dwellings, the careful tendence with which Charles surrounded her, that neither ambition, nor love of pleasure, nor love of wealth had any share in bringing about her fall. And, as widely different were their lives, so different also were their deaths, one, betrayed by those who owed her most, perished miserably at the stake, a martyr and a heroine to the last, while Agnes Sorel died tranquilly upon her bed, making her final acts promote the good of numbers yet unborn, by endowing public institutions with the wealth lavished on her by Charles, and greatly as she

erred, so deeply did she repent her error. In the days of her influence with her royal lover, the beautiful, tender-hearted, and much-loved favourite was known as the active, untiring protectress and friend of all those in distress. Humble-minded, gentle, and generous, she was never wearied of seeking out fresh cases where her aid might be effectual.

A monument to her memory was erected in the chapel at Loches, carved in limestone white as snow, and placed on a base of black marble. The effigy of *La Dame de Beauté* was most rarely beautiful; her hands being clasped and raised as if in prayer, while two angels hovered over her. Long, flowing drapery clothed her figure, while a simple circlet was her only ornament. The exquisite sweetness, gentleness, and refinement that were the characteristics of her beauty, were rendered with rare fidelity in this statue.

In the billiard-room of the Chateau d'Eu, in Normandy, might be seen, Acton Warburton* tells us, some few years back, "the pensive face of Joan of Arc and the sunny beauty of Agnes Sorel, enclosed in the same panel. The parure of Agnes is extremely simple. She wears a black velvet robe laced in front over her bosom, which sets off its dazzling whiteness. Her hair is parted Madonna-wise; a gauze veil, fine as woven hair, is fastened at the division, and floats downwards at either side over her shoulders and neck. O Agnes, that face of thine is worth a pilgrimage but to look upon!—to see thee once is to see thee always. 'Haunting us like a passion,' those lovely lineaments are present ever with an undiminished spell, ineffaceable by all the images of after years."

* "Rollo and his Race, or Footsteps of the Normans," vol. i. p. 137.

VII.

THE SEPARATE SERVICES RENDERED TO THE CAUSE OF
CHARLES VII BY JOAN OF ARC, AGNES SOREL, AND
JACQUES CŒUR

IT had been asserted that Agnes Sorel died from the effects of poison, and in the trial of Jacques Cœur (of which we shall presently speak) it was alleged as one amongst other crimes against the king's *argentier*. What foundation there was in such an accusation may be judged of by the fact that in her last will and testament, made during her fatal illness, Agnes Sorel named Jacques Cœur as one of its executors. The entire political career of the *Dame de Beauté* was identified with that of the king's *argentier*, her most faithful friend, the treasurer of her savings, who furnished her with the finest jewellery, diamonds, and most brilliant stuffs for her toilet. We are at a loss, moreover, to trace any symptoms of poisoning in this case of a well-defined malady from which the patient suffered during a period of forty days! The charge of poison being the agent in the deaths of so many celebrated personages, who happen to have been carried off somewhat suddenly whilst in apparent good health, is to the historical student a thrice-hackneyed assertion of constant recurrence.

The *Dame de Beauté*—an appellation more charmingly distinctive than any mere hollow title of nobility would have been—left three daughters, who all married well: the eldest, Charlotte, to Charles de Brezé, the second, named Marie, to Olivier de Crequi, and Jeanne, the youngest, to Antoine de Bueil. Jacques Cœur himself caused the tomb to be erected to her memory which so long ornamented the church of Loches, in Touraine, on which was inscribed these words: "*Oh ! mort, toujours inflexible, tu as arraché de la vie un si beau corps dans ses plus jeunes années*." This monument was destroyed during the time of the French revolution.

The fame of Agnes Sorel long survived the possessions

she left behind her, and she was invoked as the benefactress of her country for two centuries afterwards. The poet Baïf—who flourished in the reigns of Henry II. and Charles IX. and who was the friend of Ronsard—visiting the farm or grange of La Ferté-Mesnil, where Agnes Sorel expired, wrote these sorrowful lines upon the premature demise of the Dame de Beauté—

“ Mais las ! elle ne put rompre la destinée
Qui pour trancher ses jours l'avait ici menée
Où la mort la surprit . . .

O mort ! cette beauté
Devait par sa douceur fléchir ta cruauté ;
Mais la lui ravissant à la fleur de son âge
Si grand que tu cuidais n'a esté ton outrage,
Car si elle eût fourni l'entier nombre de jours
Que lui pouvait donner de nature le cours,
Ses beaux traits, son beau teint et sa belle charnure
De la tarde vieillesse allait subir l'injure
Et le surnom de belle avecque sa beauté
Lui fut pour tout jamais par les hommes otés ;
Mais jusques à sa mort l'ayant vue toujours telle,
Ne pouvait lui oter le surnom de belle.”

We have seen by the more epigrammatic quatrain of that gallant king, soldier and poet, Francis I., in what light he held the memory of the gentle Agnes, and that he attributed to her merits far above those of the indolent monks and nuns of her day, who, however exemplary they might have been at their devotions, made not the slightest exertion towards recovering the prostrate realm of France. The political services, in fact, which the *Dame de Beauté* had rendered both to her sovereign and her country, were of the highest order. Agnes had prompted Charles VII. to a patriotic crusade against the English, and had also induced him to shake off the tormenting and restraining yoke of the captains of the free companies, and to establish a regularly organized government instead, that should give force and impulsion to the dwindled monarchy of the “little King of Bourges.” Agnes Sorel thus swayed with masterly judgment the most momentous period of the reign of Charles the Victorious, of which the career of Joan of Arc was only a brief episode.

If we study attentively the result of the short though

eventful course of action of the enthusiastic and valiant peasant maid, we shall find that she exercised merely a transient influence over the destinies of the monarchy of Charles VII Patriot and martyr as we must own her to have been, and wonderful as that unheard of enterprise certainly was, yet it proved simply one of those camp romances which served to restore the depressed courage of the vanquished men at arms The rescue and liberation of the city of Orleans from the English by the instrumentality of the mystico enthusiastic girl had temporarily a prodigious effect For the first time in this fatal war it was seen that there was a possibility, not merely of withstanding, but even of defeating, an English force upon French ground It is the duty of all to rejoice in the triumphs of their country's arms, but no Englishman can regret the want of success which attended the presumptuous injustice of the audacious attempt to unite the crown of France with that of England—in attempt which, if successful, could have had no other result than to diminish England into a mere viceroyalty, since the larger interests of the continent of Europe must have naturally absorbed all the attention of the sovereign of France The enthusiasm, then, of the Maid of Orleans awakened and strengthened the patriotic feeling and loyalty of the people, but did not reconcile Charles VII with his great feudatories, who, whilst they remained hostile or even neutral, rendered the recovery of his kingdom hopeless This is the common sense interpretation of the story so far

What Joan of Arc failed to do, Agnes Sorel, with the concurrence of the king's argentier, really did accomplish She reconciled Charles with his great feudal nobles of Brittany and of Burgundy, as well as with the house of Anjou, who thenceforward steadily supported his cause, and, strong in such alliances, Charles VII once more entered Paris, reconquered Normandy, and delivered his territories definitively from the hateful presence of the English

As, however, the legend like story of the Maid of Orleans has come down to us tinged with the more fascinating element of the mysterious, and mingled with all that is rich in fancy, no wonder that the attractiveness of its incidents

arrested the attention of the popular mind more irresistibly than the results attained through the calmer, far more important, but no less prevailing influence of the high-minded Agnes Sorel. The heavenly visions of the enthusiastic peasant-girl, which appeared to her when tending the flocks and herds in her native pastures of Domrèmy—her discovery of the mystic sword—her unhesitating identification of the disguised king at Bourges—and much more, all belong to that *omne ignotum* which looms with spell-binding glamour through the haze of past centuries. The one story belongs to a saint-like mysticism, and to a romantic marvel of the Middle Ages. An inspired girl from the rustic class, who exchanges her feminine attire for a suit of steel, and mounted on a war horse, opens—sword in hand—the road to Rheims by scattering the ranks of the beleaguering English, and conducts thither her careless, ease-loving sovereign for his consecration, in fulfilment of her vow, formed an episode certainly calculated to popularize itself in the imagination of the fifteenth century; whilst the part enacted by Agnes Sorel was confined within the less ostentatious limits of love, chivalry, and politics. The course of history exhibits various counterparts to this exceptional episode of which Joan was the heroine; and without seeking to detract one iota from her merits, we may remark, in passing, that there has frequently been shown a disposition to attribute to marvellous causes that which was only the result of an extraordinary combination of concurrent events. It will be seen that after the siege of Paris by the men-at-arms under Joan, where the heroic girl was wounded, the banner of the lilies was again trailed in the dust with as much prostration as before the consecration at Rheims. The poor maid herself, treacherously deserted, it is said, at Compiègne by her own soldiers, had fallen into the hands of the English, and her prestige was lost for any further succour to her country. Discouragement as deep as that which existed before the apparition of the peasant-maid had again depressed Charles's followers. Who now revived the national courage? Who now inspired the dejected monarch with energetic resolutions? Charles, as we have said, was naturally brave, but his spirit had been gradually

sinking under a series of disasters, and he had at last given himself up to despair. Vainly did his exemplary queen endeavour to rouse him. She adjured him by all he owed to France—to the claims of his subjects, to the house of Valois—but her words fell upon a dull and apathetic listener. The beloved Agnes tried her spell in vain, though she brought all that eloquence with which she was so singularly gifted to aid the cause of honour and of France. She depicted in glowing colours the misery of their native land, the boasts of the haughty Bedford, the tyranny of the English troops, his own tarnished reputation. Long and persistently she urged him. She appealed earnestly to the love he professed to cherish—to her deep affection for him—in vain. Then occurred the incident of the astrologer, already told, which—whether by accident or design—her woman's wit turned so promptly to such good account. It proved the turning point of Charles's fortunes, as well as of those of France. And the energetic *Dame de Beaute* having next succeeded in reconciling her royal lover to his great misadventures, *il fit si bien par son bonheur et vaillance* that he felt the crown of France, which was falling from his head, firmly replaced on it, his dismembered kingdom united once more and consolidated under his sole sceptre, and that he had given, as Charles the Victorious, to every Frenchman a free country once again.

Who then, broke the fettering spell under which the young king lay so long and helplessly? The first stanza of the spirited modern war song—in which the name of Agnes Sorel was invoked to arouse the French nation, in 1814, against the domination of the stranger—will best answer—

Il faut partir Agnès l'ordonne
 Adieu repos plaisir adieu
 J'aurai pour venger ma couronne
 Mes lauriers l'amour et mon Dieu
 Français que le nom de ma belle
 Dans leurs rangs porte la terreur
 J'oublais la gloire auprès d'elle,
 Agnès me rend tout à l'honneur

Jean Chartier, the monk of Saint Denis, the compiler of the "Great Chronicles of France," and who had lived in close intimacy with Charles VII, constituted himself the defender

of Agnes Sorel against every attack. Doubtless his position near the king's person must have rendered him very indulgent towards the *Dame de Beauté*; and whilst his narrative must not be taken for the plain truth, it indicates clearly and most graphically the impressions of the age. Jean Chartier has only traced back the life of Agnes from the period of her death. An entire chapter of his chronicle is devoted to her under the title of *La Belle Agnès*. The pious chronicler, in his resumé of the *Dame de Beauté's* life, excuses her profane amours by a saintlike death. The abbey under the shadow of whose towers the noble-minded woman breathed her last sigh was the largest and most important in Normandy—and that fine specimen of early Norman architecture, though now roofless and a hollow ruin, still shows in its broken shafts and mutilated sculpture, its ivy-clad ogives, side-chapels heaped with rubbish, and choked-up fountains and piscine, abundant evidence of how great must have been its pristine glory in the Middle Ages: Jumièges, contemporary with William the Conqueror, and whose mitred abbot excommunicated Robert the Devil!* And in its annals we read this historical notice: “During the six weeks which King Charles VII. sojourned at Jumièges, Agnes Sorel was seized with a decided attack of dysentery, of which she died at the farm of Mesnil, a dependency of the said abbey, 9th day of February, 1449, at six o'clock in the evening, aged forty.”

The few remaining cartularies which time has spared, record that Agnes Sorel bequeathed thirty crowns to the church of St. Aspar de Melun, and two thousand golden crowns to Notre Dame de Loches, her place of sepulture, for a daily service to be celebrated in the said church.

* A wealthy Parisian who purchased the estate, a few years since, on which the venerable ruin stands, has built a handsome residence in the Gothic style to harmonise with the adjacent abbey, having a museum attached, in which he has piously collected all the *disjecta fragmenta* that possess anything like historic or artistic interest. Amongst other precious relics the author, who, in the summer of 1859, was, by the courtesy of its owner, shown over the museum and abbey, saw the elaborately-carved horizontal slab that formerly covered the tomb of Agnes Sorel. It is flat, without an effigy, and round the edge runs the following inscription:—“C'y git Damoiselle Agnès Sewrelle, en son vivant Dame de Beauté, d'Issoldun et Vernon sur Seine, piéteuse aux pauvres, laquelle trespassa le neuvième jour de l'evrier en l'an 1449.”

The title of *alms giver* is therefore well merited by her in their annals

Jumieges, apart from being one of the largest Anglo Norman ruins in France, is still visited with interest as associated with the last days of Agnes Sorel. It is also associated with the final expulsion of the English from Normandy. The choir and the Lady chapel of the abbey are gone. In the last lay the heart of Agnes. She had endowed this monastery with large estates, and the grateful monks requested that thus much of their benefactress should remain with them, whilst it was decided that at the church of Loches, in Touraine, her beautiful body should be surrendered to decay. They therefore erected a monument here, where Agnes appeared in effigy, offering her heart to the Virgin. The effigy was destroyed by the Huguenots, who at the same time committed horrible excesses in the monastery. The monument survived until the Revolution, when it shared the fate of the effigy—the slab being alone preserved. A melancholy feeling pervades the mind on contemplating this detached fragment of a sculptured record raised to the memory of one who was a munificent benefactress to the poor, as well as to the church which she so largely endowed. Alas! that not even the sanctuary can shield tomb or effigy from the wild fury of maddened revolutionists.

“How few the women,” remarks Warburton, speaking of the noble *Dame de Beaute*, “disposed to turn to good account the influence they may acquire over man! Indeed, most women are incapable of doing so. Furnished by nature with small sympathy for man’s higher aspirations, they reluctant purposes they cannot comprehend, and whose pursuit competes with their affection. Thus, as the bracelets of the Sabines slew Tarpeia, man is often crushed by the love that should have adorned his life. On the other hand, those who could respond to man’s loftier aims, too frequently shrink from the apparent hazard. They conceive their soft dominion is put in jeopardy by the admission to his heart of such formidable competitors as ambition, general benevolence, or the like. They do not understand that lofty

desires and a life of earnest action are the best allies of love. As the heart becomes nobler, its love becomes nobler also. Deeply and truly it cannot love unless it aspires too."

Thus do many women fail of their mission. They regard the love they awaken as an end. They should look upon it as a means only to ennoble man. They were sent to make him not so much a lover as a hero; and some such there are—of that order to which belonged Lady Elizabeth Hastings, of whom Congreve said, that "to love her was a liberal education."

Well was it for France that Agnes Sorel trusted to the love of Charles—that she felt glory might be its associate, without becoming a rival in his heart; and even if it should, she was one who cared not for an undivided empire, unless it were a noble one. And she had her reward. It was the love of Agnes that drew Charles VII. from the ignoble luxury of his retreat, and matched the Sybarite of Chinon with the conquerors of Agincourt. It was the love of Agnes which awakened that energy before which even Talbot and Warwick recoiled. She lived to see her lover honoured and victorious, and to feel that she was then only the dearer to him because he was conscious that he deserved her.

"Oh, that Niebuhr," further remarks Warburton, "had exerted a little of his ingenuity to hunt out or invent some facts—to devise and marshal cunning arguments, whereby we might be led to assent to Schiller's view of this question, that the king was not married, and that he offered his hand to the saviour of his country!"

"Zieren wurde sie
Den ersten thron der Welt, doch sie verschmäht ihn,
Nur meine liebe will sie seyn und heissen."

Act i. sc. 1, 'Die Jungfrau von Orleans.'

"Surely the German ingenuity would be better thus employed than in pulling to pieces our dear old school-room faith in the Kings of Rome, and dissipating so many other boyish illusions, whose beauty was better than all his truth. But, under present circumstances, with our present lights, we cannot get Marie of Anjou out of the way. And if it

be said, therefore, that my observations on the influence of women are misplaced, by reason of Agnes' position, let me remind you that it was at the earnest and repeated solicitations of Marie that she came back to the court of Charles, that the beautiful maid of honour ever found her best friend in the queen, and it is not too much to ask you to look upon the favourite with the eyes of the loving wife." Thus eloquently pleads Acton Warburton for the memory of the gentle Agnes.

Although the Dauphin Louis had manifested small liking at any time for Agnes Sorel, yet when the *Dame de Beauté* was no more, on succeeding to his father's throne the new king took right good heed to profit by both her system and her services—for Agnes had more than once rid Charles VII of the domination of those high-handed, steel-clad counsellors, the captains of the men at arms. How often does the page of history show us that when one kind of power succeeds to another, the ascendant power often adopts alike the ideas and the men associated with the fallen power, although it had fiercely fought against both during the period of contention! Authority, in whatsoever hands it may be placed, commonly follows certain fixed ideas, which it adopts when it desires to make itself obeyed and respected. In other words, we perceive that in bringing to pass the disastrous catastrophes of the world's history, the will and agency of man are but instruments by which the Divine will accomplishes its immutable purposes of wisdom and justice. Louis VI therefore protected the memory of Agnes Sorel, as the following incident proves. On the occasion of his visiting the church of Loches, shortly after his accession, the canons, ungrateful to the memory of their benefactress, wishing to flatter the new king, begged his permission to destroy and remove the tomb of Agnes Sorel, which, newly erected, formed a conspicuous ornament in the centre of their church. Louis of Valois, with his sneering look and wonted exclamation of *Pasques-dieu* replied, "that he willingly consented to it, on one condition—that they should at the same time renounce the valuable gifts and bequests the *Dame de*

Beauté had made them." The canons decided upon retaining what they possessed of the "gentle" Agnes in its entirety.

We have incidentally spoken of the trial of Jacques Cœur, in its connexion with the death of Agnes Sorel, and will now give a brief statement of what led to such procedure against that patriotic financier. Through the remarkable aptitude which he developed in commercial and monetary affairs whilst holding the modest appointment of the king's *argentier*, Jacques Cœur became in turn ambassador and master of the mint of his royal master. This man, who, after a highly successful and distinguished career, was destined to undergo much undeserved persecution and become the sport of adverse fortune, was not only the wealthiest man of that age, but the benefactor of his country, and deserves to be ranked among the celebrities of France, alike for his patriotism as for his skill and intelligence in trade, art, and finance. After having rendered, in conjunction with Agnes Sorel, to Charles VII. the signal services already mentioned, Jacques Cœur was ennobled, and reached the pinnacle of his great fortunes. When Charles the Victorious went to take possession of Normandy, he wished that his sagacious and unassuming counsellor, to whom he acknowledged himself indebted for a portion of his success in bringing his wars to a brilliant result, should figure in his retinue on that occasion, amongst other men of distinction. The Sire Jacques Cœur, *argentier* as he was, therefore figured in the triumphal march on the same footing and in the same equipment as the *beau Dunois*.

It would have been strange if such favours bestowed, and such immense wealth especially, had not excited the envy and hatred of some, and the covetousness of others. A *parvenu*, a man sprung from the ranks of the people, to be seen figuring side by side, and on equal terms, with the first noblemen of the realm! Unheard-of audacity! All the greater that the majority of those highly-descended nobles were his debtors, and that the weight of such benefit seemed to them so heavy to bear.

A circumstance chanced to bring this tacit plot of greedy animosities to a head. Georges de la Tremouille had purchased, at the cost of twenty thousand golden crowns, divers domains of the Marquis de Montferrat. He was unable to complete the purchase-money, and beheld with undisguised rage all those broad lands and stately castles pass into the hands of Jacques Cœur, who liquidated the amount fixed for their acquisition. La Tremouille associated the Seigneur de Chabannes in his vengeance, and Jeanne de Vendôme joined with them in the plot. An unforeseen event—the death of Agnes Sorel—rendered them masters of the king's mind, who had until then resisted all their machinations.

Agnes Sorel, as we have seen, had expired rather suddenly at the abbey of Jumièges, whither she had repaired on the occasion of Charles holding his court there. The *argentier's* enemies laboured strenuously to aggravate the king's grief by insinuating that Jacques Cœur had destroyed the *Dame de Beauté* by means of poison. A warrant for his arrest was extorted from the disconsolate monarch, and the faithful servant found himself consigned to a dungeon. He was deprived of every means necessary to justify himself—any interview with his son, the Archbishop of Bourges, was forbidden him, he was stripped of his possessions, which were shared amongst his accusers, and those very persons were constituted judges to try him. The first charge of the council attempted to be established against Jacques Cœur was at once strange and improbable. He was accused of having poisoned Agnes Sorel with drugs and poisons brought from Syria and Italy. This accusation, sustained by Jeanne de Vendôme, was too absurd. We repeat, how, in the face of such known fact, would Agnes have been likely to choose Jacques Cœur as the executor of her will as she lay on her death-bed? The charge, therefore, was at once pronounced a calumny, and Jeanne de Vendôme punished, but during Jacques Cœur's mission to Italy the prosecution was renewed. It was alleged that the *argentier*, in whose hands Agnes Sorel had deposited heavy sums, had sought to appropriate them to himself. Chabannes, the king's favourite

joined in the conspiracy, and a commission was named with powers to bring Jacques Cœur to trial.

The charges brought against the king's *argentier* before the commission were as follows. First, of having committed several extortions in Languedoc; secondly, of having shipped in galleys arms for the service of the Sultan of Egypt; thirdly, of having fabricated crowns alloyed in such a manner as to gain 20 or 30 per cent. in a mark; fourthly, of having conveyed "many monies" out of the kingdom; fifthly, of having cheated the two Seigneurs de Canillac and de Lafayette out of 2000 crowns, under pretext that the king wanted them to play at dice during the Christmas festival; finally, he was charged with having stolen formerly 2450 livres from the market tolls.

These charges were in themselves either absurd or false; but since the death of Agnes Sorel the captains of the great bands of men-at-arms had regained their power, and it was necessary to conciliate them by some sort of pilage. It was whilst at the castle of Lusignan that sentence was launched against Jacques Cœur—not with pain of death: they did not want to take his life, but only his property. So they confiscated his possessions "for the crime of extortion and exaction of our finances, of transportation of a large quantity of money to the Saracens, conveyance of gold and silver bullion out of our kingdom." They proceeded against him by seizure of confiscated moveables and immoveables. As the wealth of Maître Jacques Cœur also consisted in credits upon divers individuals, and that he was in account even with the heirs of Agnes Sorel, each debtor was required to declare upon oath what the amount of his debt was to the king's *argentier*, and this inquiry extended as far as the bankers of Genoa and of Venice in account current with him. If they proceeded so far as to shut up Jacques Cœur in the castle of Tarascon, that was that he might the better declare the amount of his credits. Later, Jacques Cœur succeeded in effecting his escape, and the Sovereign Pontiff received him right honourably. He went then to Venice, where he established himself, and there continued his former commerce with Egypt and the East, and the country of the infidels.

The confiscated possessions of Jacques Cœur were divided between the king and the captains of the men at arms—Chabannes, the most favoured of all, obtained the rich lands of Saint-Fargeau, Concy, and de Pereuse, which included twenty seven parishes. Later, all came to an end by a trial and a transaction with the children of Jacques Cœur. These latter claimed, in right of their mother, the dower recognised by the Roman law. The holders of the confiscated lands compounded with them for an indemnity. The laws of regular justice had been so outrageously ignored, that it was impossible for them to keep possession of property so illgotten unblushingly in the eyes of Heaven and man. But it was not till the reign of Louis XI that justice was fully done to the memory of Jacques Cœur.

Under the influence of the captains of "Free Lances," who obtained power once more under Charles VII after the death of Agnes Sorel, there arose a great exaltation of the memory of the Maid of Orleans. Her trial was revised and her sentence reversed, for it concerned the associate of their victories. Let us observe how tardy this rehabilitation was. There was no mention of it so long as the sway of the great barons, under Agnes Sorel, ruled the king's council. But so soon as this power was destroyed, to fall back again into the hands of the captains of the "Free Lances," and the persecution of Jacques Cœur the financier was being carried on, then there was a revival of the popular legend of *La Pucelle*, the glorious episode of the days of Tanneguy Duchatel, Dunois, La Hire, and Xantraille. Joan of Arc had been the heroine of those times, and so they revived her memory.

Then the Duke of Burgundy was seen to reappear in the lists against his king and suzerain, having welcomed hospitably the Dauphin at his court. Positions were changed, and, as Monstrelet says significantly, "*chacun ne songeait qu'à se pourvoir*." The league of the Dukes of Burgundy and d'Alençon with the Dauphin threw King Charles VII into an inconceivable melancholy. Dunois and Chabannes governed him after an absolute fashion, and all eyes were

turned towards the Dauphin, who had then withdrawn to Gennapes, in the territory of the Duke of Burgundy. The young prince appeared to be entirely without occupation. To conceal his designs, he continued to compile his facetious book of the *Cent Nouvelles*, destined for the amusement of the ladies of the court of Burgundy. The Dauphin looked upon his sire Charles VII. as an undone king, entirely a captive in the hands of the audacious captains of the great companies, whom the Dauphin now detested most heartily. The league in preparation had for its object the reconstruction of the great vassalage of the French crown, such as Agnes Sorel had fostered by her influence.

Charles VII., enfeebled by age and his position, had scarcely a second thought about anything, save one—the dread of being poisoned. This made him reject all nourishment. He had quitted Paris to withdraw once more into the strongholds of Touraine, where he had passed his early life, surrounded by Tanneguy Duchatel, Dunois, and Chabannes. His tottering limbs scarce sustained his body, and clad in a long, loose robe, he no longer carried his sword. Charles the Victorious died so far forsaken, that there was not even the usual solemn procession at his funeral. Dunois alone attended at it. All were busying themselves with the new reign of the Dauphin, who assumed the title of Louis XI. All were—

“Gone to salute the rising morn.”



CHAPTER IV.

DIANA OF POITIERS

I

MADAME DE CHATEAUBRIAND AND MADemoisELLE DE HEILLY,
FAVOURITES OF FRANCIS THE FIRST

THE characters of the two rival monarchs, Francis I of France and Henry VIII of England, though bearing close resemblance in many points, were strongly dissimilar in others. Both were high spirited, fond of show and magnificence, of passionate and licentious temperament, yet female influence exerted itself in a widely different manner over the conduct of the two princes. While Henry enacted the royal Bluebeard to his wives, and the remorseless doomsman to the male favourites who incurred his savage wrath, the besetting fault of the reign of Francis, and that which led to his most serious reverses, was that of allowing himself to be controlled, even in the most important affairs, by petticoat government, and by shallow-minded and incapable favourites. His mother, Louise of Savoy, in the earlier part of the reign, ruled the state at her pleasure, and to her unquestionably must be attributed the treason of Bourbon and the loss of the Milanese. Madame de Chateaubriand, the talented and fascinating mistress of the young king, established a shameful traffic in appointments of all kinds—military, political, and civil—by which the

public service became miserably corrupt; while the Duchess of Etampes, her successor, leagued with the Duke of Orleans against his father and the Dauphin, and was base enough to reveal the king's secrets to the emperor at the most critical period of the war. The elevation of such men as Bonnivet and Montmorency to posts for which they were manifestly unfit, betrayed a similar weakness, and produced equally pernicious results.

It is both curious and interesting, in many respects, to trace the important parts played by those two royal favourites Madame de Chateaubriand and Diana of Poitiers in their special connexion with the two great antagonistic parties which arose in France in their day—the Catholic-League and Huguenot—whose fiery animosities ultimately brought about those sanguinary religious wars which so long scourged and desolated that “fair land of the lilies.”

The tidings of the captivity of its gay and gallant king—Francis I.—as one of the sad results of the disastrous battle of Pavia, had filled the French court with deep and mingled feelings of sorrow and depression. The queen-mother had assumed the regency, and with the political power the tutelage of her grandsons, still in their tender youth—the Dauphin and Henry Duke of Orleans. Since the period when King John of France had become the prisoner of Edward III. of England, the spirit of the former nation had never been more depressed, nor its position more critical—neither unity nor public peace existing. As it was necessary to raise taxes to provide for the ransom of Francis, the opposition of parliaments was to be dreaded, which in general took advantage of the dearth of the country to renew their remonstrances. The preaching of Luther and Calvin had given rise to popular insurrections (*jacqueries*) on all sides; the chateaux were pillaged by armed bands, and the peasants had risen in mass in Lorraine, Champagne, and even in the vicinity of the capital. Upon one particular point, in Alsatia, one thousand German reiters, of fierce aspect and guttural speech, had quartered themselves upon the surrounding domains, and proclaimed therein a sinister

and menacing kind of equality and fraternity. The regent, with a view of restoring something like order in her son's realm, was induced to take certain measures against the propagation of Lutheran ideas. These measures were adopted at that juncture less by way of religious persecution than as precautions for the public safety thus imperilled.

Here, then, certain historical facts of very considerable importance manifest themselves—the commencement of the power of the Guises, and their political union with Diana of Poitiers. The first of these brave Lorraine princes had just scattered like so many raging wolves the insurgent Lutheran peasants in several sanguinary encounters, and his services in the provinces increased his power in the court and capital. Under the influence of his successes, and through the concurrence of Diana of Poitiers, the *Comté* of Guise was raised to a ducal peerage. Great conformity of opinion existed between Diana and the Guise princes on the subject of repressing these religious innovations, which reproduced one and another like a wide-spread *jacquerie*, and threatened a fresh civil war by preparing the way for the return of the great free companies.

It was otherwise with Madame de Chateaubriand, who by family ties belonged essentially to the third party—that of moderation and tolerance. The friend of Marguerite de Valois,* sister of Francis I., a noble-hearted princess, and though on friendly terms with the poet Marot, and the Genevan erudites, Beza, Erasmus, Bude, and even with Calvin, Madame de Chateaubriand did not hold her opinions

* Voltaire gives a striking but somewhat overcharged, picture of the state of things which religious persecutions had induced — ‘On brûlait d’un côté, et on chantait de l’autre, en riant les psaumes de Marot, selon le génie, toujours léger et que quelquefois très-cruel, de la nation Française. Toute la cour de Marguerite reine de Navarre et sœur de François I., était Calviniste, la moitié de celle du roi l’était. Ce qui commençait par le peuple avait passé aux grands, comme il arrive toujours. On faisait secrètement les prêches—on disputait par tout hautement. Ces querelles, dont personne ne se soucie aujourd’hui ni dans Paris, ni à la cour, parcequ’elles sont anciennes, aiguillonnaient dans leur nouveauté tous les esprits. Il y avait dans le parlement de Paris plus d’un membre attaché à ce qu’on appelait la réforme. Ce corps était toujours occupé à combattre les prétensions de l’église de Rome, que l’hérésie détruisait.—*L’Esprit des Nations*

so fervently and tenaciously as Diana of Poitiers. She disliked the house of Guise, and allied herself with that of Montmorency, in order to struggle more strongly against the influence of the former. Clement Marot, whom she patronized, had shown his courage during the war in Italy, and having been wounded whilst fighting by the king's side at Pavia, had returned to France, and always somewhat blunder-headed in his crotchety enthusiasm, had been thrown a second time into the dungeons of the Châtelet, whence he had written to his sovereign, detailing his misfortunes, whilst imploring the generosity of Charles V. Though unable to follow in the train of Marguerite de Valois, he did not the less applaud a project which that princess had just formed—that she herself should repair to Madrid in order to console her captive brother, who felt his position so acutely that he had sunk into a deep melancholy. Marguerite had obtained a safe conduct from Charles V., limited to a certain time, and without hesitation the princess had set out, accompanied by a bevy of ladies, among whom was the Countess de Chateaubriand; for Marguerite had small affection for Diana of Poitiers—too closely allied with the Guises to approve the tolerance of Marguerite de Valois for the Huguenots.

When this court of noble dames arrived at Madrid, they found King Francis confined to his couch, with tears in his eyes and despair in his heart. Charles V. had only once visited him, under pretence of telling his royal prisoner that a serious treaty between them was impossible, from the intimate relations then existing between the two monarchs; for in his eyes, he observed, he could not look upon Francis as a captive king, but merely as an unfortunate friend and brother.* These words served merely as a pretext for leaving free scope to the imperative exigencies of the council of Castile. Though even Charles V. had granted a safe-conduct to Marguerite, it was that he

* Their conversation was brief:—*Francis I.*: “Your majesty wishes, then, to see your prisoner die?” *Charles V.*: “You are not my prisoner, only my friend and brother.”—Arnold Ferron, *De Rerum Gallicæ*, lib. viii.

feared for his prisoner's life—his sole guarantee. Can it nevertheless be credited that less exalted sentiments ought to be attributed to the great-minded Charles, and which may be thus summed up?—"This Francis of France dead, no further pledge remains for imposing on that country a stringent treaty of peace." In repelling even this odious aspect of the negotiation, it would have been equally inimical to his fame, both as a Christian and a king, that a prince, such as was Francis the First, should be suffered to expire of ennui and anguish in the dreary *Retiro* of Madrid. So the safe conduct was readily granted to Margaret of Valois and her bevy of beauties, who everywhere along their route were received with honour and distinction, and were escorted as far as the gates of Madrid by officers of the emperor.

To dwell upon the tenderness lavished by the well-beloved sister upon her royal brother, would be to depict the devotion of a life. Sprightly by nature and witty of speech, the princess had surrounded herself with young and graceful women like herself; and the *Marguerite* (daisy), as Marot calls her, shone the conspicuous centre of a brilliant garland of flowers. During the long evenings of his captivity at Madrid, she improvised or read to her brother those somewhat free tales of hers, after the style of Boccaccio "*The Heptameron*," which afterwards bore the name of the Queen of Navarre, is a collection of short tales, treating attractively upon subjects of love and gallantry. Thinly veiled as they were, these tales of a favourite sister afforded the gallant king amusing revelations of the manners of his court, and of the ladies in it he had known and admired. Brantome has been still more free and daring in his portraits, not sparing even Queen Marguerite herself—"Bien disante des choses d'amour et qui en savaient plus que son pain quotidien en matiere de galanteries."

As soon as the treaty was signed at Madrid, however fatal it might be in its conditions, life seemed to assume a new phase for King Francis, and everything to smile again with a radiant gaiety for the long-depressed monarch, from

the consciousness that he was about to see once more his native France. Charles V., in no way frank and openhearted, and who had up to that moment held himself so reserved, now came in joyous guise to visit him whom he had so lately treated with grave reservation and like a prisoner of state. The two princes were now seen riding side by side through the streets of Madrid, exchanging tokens of a mutual confidence.

The emperor, however, did not place implicit reliance on the faithful execution of the treaty—the Nemesis of all those who impose conditions too onerous in their hour of victory. Neither prince nor nation remains long humbled beneath the abuse of force. On his part Francis I. had some fear that Charles might not restore him the liberty he so longed for, after a captivity which had weighed so heavily upon him. It was therefore with indescribable delight that both kings heard of the arrival at Bayonne of the Duchess of Angoulême, the queen-mother, with the two princes her grandsons, destined to be left in Spain as hostages for their royal father. Francis I. thereupon immediately quitted Madrid, accompanied by an escort of honour and surveillance, under orders to guard him as far as the banks of the Bidassoa. The Spanish historians say that Charles V. journeyed with his brother monarch as far as Vittoria, and that whilst on the road thither, full of misgivings with regard to the faithful execution of the treaty, the emperor said to him—

“My brother, you now see yourself at liberty. Thus far we have only treated as sovereigns: let us act from this hour as gentlemen. Do you still pledge yourself to perform all your promises? Answer frankly.”

Francis solemnly pledged himself, stretching forth his hands towards the crosses that stood by the roadside, as is customary in Spain. These misgivings and precautions were not wholly imaginary, for what was then passing in Paris might have justified them.

The Duchess of Angoulême, solicitous of everything that might divert her well-beloved son and welcome him back to France, had brought with her a charming retinue of dames

and damoiselles, who were destined to embellish the nuptials of Francis with the Queen of Portugal, sister of Charles V, —one of the conditions of the treaty “There could be no nuptials without a ballet, and no fête without the ladies” Leonora of Portugal had that taciturn and melancholy temperament characteristic of the princesses of the house of Austria, the majority of whose lives began within the shade of convent walls, and ended in palaces gloomier still. The French king had just gone through a cruel ceremony on the banks of the Bidassoa—his two darling boys were torn from his arms and handed over to the Spanish commissioners at the same moment that the king crossed the river on horseback. Free at last, and happy to find himself once again upon the soil of France, he made but one day’s ride of it from Fontarabia to Bayonne, where his mother’s joyous court had arrived, bringing beauty and pleasure to gild the pinions of the newly descended dove of peace.

Among the damoiselles who accompanied the Duchess of Angoulême, was one distinguished from all the rest by her vivacity, youth, and peculiar gracefulness. She was known as Anne de Pisseieu, or Mademoiselle d’Heilly, daughter of Antony, lord of Meudon. Born in 1508, she was therefore eighteen at the time of the journey to Bayonne, in 1526. Her features have been preserved in two immortal works—Primaticcio has reproduced Anne de Pisseieu on canvas, and Jean Goujon has chiselled her bust. She was not exactly pretty, having a brow too prominent to be intelligent, eyes of a dull blue without much expression, a long nose, but a charming mouth, the lines of which were somewhat effaced by the youthful plumpness of her cheeks. But over all this peculiarity of countenance there was a singularly brilliant freshness, like that possessed by those graceful yet robust girls reared in the castles of the Middle Ages, and accustomed to follow the chase on horseback, staff in hand and falcon on wrist. Such was Mademoiselle d’Heilly when she was presented to King Francis I on his return from captivity at Madrid. The king then of mature age, but still of impetuous sensibility, was seized with a mad passion for Mademoiselle

d'Heilly, to such a pitch as to forget everything else beside : so far indeed as to efface the hard stipulations of the treaty of Madrid, and the immense sacrifices even of Francis's own family—imposing upon it a most sorrowful separation. It was a cruel sight in the eyes of all present, to witness the king's two young and lovely boys there and then carried away as hostages, weeping bitterly on being torn from his loving arms and the endearments of their own court. The eldest, Francis, dauphin of France, then just ten years old, the other eight, named Henry,* Duke of Orleans, both graceful lads, were delivered up to the King of Spain, ignorant of the destiny in store for them ; for it was the conviction both of the council and parliament, that the treaty of Madrid, contracted without free will by a captive king, was null and void alike in letter and spirit. Such a treaty, then, was not likely to be put in execution. In such case, what resolution would Charles V. be likely to take in his wrath against those young and royal hostages placed in his hands ? The council of Castile was inflexible, like all absolute powers who uphold the right of their prerogative. The manners of Spain, too, then somewhat affected the practice of an austere—indeed sometimes pitiless severity, contracted in the wars with the Arabs : there was just cause, therefore, for uneasiness as to the fate reserved for the children of France, when the parliament should publicly declare null the treaty of Madrid.

King Francis nevertheless, entirely unmindful of the gloomy aspects of the moment or probable future fatalities, seemed solely prepossessed with his insane love for Mademoiselle d'Heilly—a love so sudden, patent, and impetuous, that it involved a rupture with Madame de Chateaubriand. In later times a sanguinary drama was mysteriously spoken of, as the sequel of that rupture. It was whispered that Jean de Laval-Montmorency, lord of Chateaubriand, had waited for the moment of his wife's disgrace to shut her up in a chamber hung with black in one of his old manor-houses in Brittany, and that, after some days of repentance and mourning, he made her open her veins. Sauval, the

* Afterwards Henry II.

anecdotal historian of the city of Paris, affirms that the sire de Chateaubriand murdered his wife in order to be at liberty to indulge himself in illicit amours. Another tradition will have it that he was the great original of the popular tale of "Bluebeard," culled by Perrault from amongst the legends of the Middle Ages.

All these absurdities have been refuted on incontestable evidence. Madame de Chateaubriand appeared again at court after Mademoiselle d'Heilly had become the royal Favourite. There is extant, in the collection of the letters of Francis I., an autograph epistle of Madame de Chateaubriand, thanking the king for the present of some rich embroidery which he sent her. Brantome gives some details relative to the incidents of this rupture. The king having requested Madame de Chateaubriand to return certain jewels he had given her, upon which several amorous devices, composed by the Queen of Navarre, were engraven, Madame de Chateaubriand caused the settings of these jewels to be melted, and said to the gentleman into whose hands she placed the ingots, "Carry these to the king, and tell him that since it has pleased him to demand back that which he so liberally gave me, I send it him in bullion. As for the devices, they are so well impressed upon my memory, and are therein held so dear, that I could not suffer any one else to dispose of them, enjoy them, or take pleasure in them, save myself."*

Madame de Chateaubriand, far from dying a violent death through the jealousy of her husband, did not depart this life till long after, and Clement Marot wrote her epitaph in verse of highly philosophic strain —

"Sous ce tombeau où git Françoise de Foix,
De qui tout bien chacun souloit dire,
Ft le disant, onc une seule voix
Ne s'avança de vouloir contredire
De grand beauté de grace qui attire,
De bon savoir, d'intelligence prompte,
De biens, d'honneur et mieux qu'on ne racompte
Dieu eternal siellement l'estoïla
O Viateur pour t'abreger le compte—
Ci gist un rien là où tout triompha †

* Brantome, "Madame Chateaubriand." † "Poésies de Marot," lib. iii.

There is no indication in these lofty moralizing lines of either a sudden or violent death. Madame de Chateaubriand lived in retirement from court during the favour of Mademoiselle d'Heilly, created by letters-patent Duchess d'Etampes. The latter, then in the plenary enjoyment of regal power, constituted herself the protectress of that semi-Huguenot school of men of letters who buzzed about the king. She gave an asylum to Rabelais on the domain of her father, the lord of Meudon, and thus he became curate of that parish, and there the Lucian of France penned his fantastic and not over-fastidious buffooneries.

There was therefore no species of flattery left untried by the poets in addressing the Duchess d'Etampes; and Marot at their head was doubly prodigal of such poetic incense. Mademoiselle d'Heilly, on one occasion having lost her colour through the fatigue of a long journey, Marot addressed her in this short flattering rondeau:—

“ Vous reprendrez, je l'affirme
Par la vie,
Ce teint que vous a osté
La déesse Beauté
Par envie.”

Whilst all this lavish incense from poets and polemics regaled the nostrils of the Duchess d'Etampes, to draw her over to the new opinions, Diana of Poitiers attached herself more and more to the party of the Guises, and of those fervent Catholics who were strongly averse to the elevation of the Duchess d'Etampes, from her showing favour to the doctrines of Calvin. It was by this royal favourite's orders that Calvin translated the Psalms. It was through her mediation that he addressed his dedications to the king; and finally, to humour her sectarian proclivities, the king married the duchess to a gentleman strongly imbued with the doctrines of the Reformation—Jean de Brosse. Nevertheless, Mademoiselle d'Heilly kept the name and title she owed to the king, that of Duchess d'Etampes, with a pension of fifty thousand livres. Diana of Poitiers needed no influence to regain possession of her patrimonial possessions, bequeathed

by her father, the Count de Saint-Vallier, and which were restored to her by one of the stipulations of the treaty of Madrid. The Duchess d'Etampes, rejoicing in her buxom youth, braved with a degree of haughtiness the more mature yet far more dazzling beauty—Diana of Poitiers, then called *Madame la Grande Sénéchale*, and whom a singular fortune awaited somewhat later in the reign of the Dauphin, afterwards Henry II.

II

INFLUENCE OF THE DUCHESS D'ETAMPES, FAVOURITE OF FRANCIS I, OVER THE COURT OF FRANCE ON THE ARRIVAL OF CATHERINE DE' MEDICI—LONG SWAY OF DIANA OF POITIERS

THE female court of Francis I presented a curious picture when, two years after the dominating sway of the queen-mother, Louise of Savoy having ceased to rule therein, a new power arose in Catherine de' Medici, the Italian consort of his second son, Henry Duke of Orleans. Of all the female members of this French king's family, his wives alone had failed to influence either his affections or actions. Alike gentle and unambitious, queens Claude and Eleonora shrunk before his coldness, and trembled at his frown, while women of lower rank, and of less than questionable virtue, braved his displeasure and moulded him to their will. Of the influence of Françoise de Foix, Countess de Chateaubriand, many baneful effects remained, although, when the opportunities of evil which she had once possessed are taken into consideration, even her career may be deemed comparatively harmless, but at the period of Catherine de' Medici's arrival in France, the full blown vices of the Duchess d'Etampes were the marvel and anathema of the nation.

The minor influences must, for obvious reasons, be passed over—each, perhaps, insignificant in itself, but in the aggregate fearfully mischievous—which were exercised by the fair and facile minds of honour, each, or nearly each, being in her turn the "Cynthia of the minute," and more than one of

whom owed her temporary favour to the Duchess d'Etampes herself, whose secret intrigues and undisguised ambition absorbed more of her time than could have been left at her disposal had she not provided the inconstant but exacting monarch with some new object of interest : and the tact with which she selected the not unwilling beauties was not one of the least of her talents. Never, upon any occasion, did she direct the attention of the king to a woman whose intellect might have secured his conquest after the spell of her beauty had ceased to enthrall him : the young and the lovely were her victims only when their youth and loveliness were their sole attractions. She was ever ready to supply her royal lover with a new mistress, but never with a friend, a companion, or a counsellor ; and thus, as she had rightly foreseen, the Gallic Sardanapalus soon became sated by the mere prettiness of his youthful houris, and returned to his allegiance to herself, wearied, and more her slave than ever.

Such was the state of the French court in which the Duchess of Orleans was called to assume her station as a princess of the blood ; and, mere girl as she was, she at once appreciated alike the difficulties and the advantages of her position. A king whose leading passions were dissipation and magnificence ; a queen (Eleonora) who shrank from publicity of all kinds, and who had neither inclination to upbraid, nor energy to resist injustice ; a dauphin, staid and serious beyond his years ; a powerful and insolent favourite (Etampes) ; a licentious nobility ; a morose and careless husband ; such were the elements out of which the Italian princess had to construct her future ; and Catherine de' Medici did not fail to prove herself worthy of the name she bore.

Italy was definitively lost to France by virtue of two solemn treaties, and it seemed as if all hope was reft from King Francis of ever recovering that country of his predilection ; nevertheless that right which he could no longer reclaim directly, he sought to obtain by powerful alliances and politic marriages. Francis I. had seconded by his utmost efforts Pope Clement VII. (of the Medici family), and the Sovereign Pontiff had warmly cherished the project

of a marriage between his own niece Catherine de' Medici and one of the sons of the French king—the youthful Duke of Orleans, the chivalrous and devoted servant of Diana of Poitiers. The Medici were a powerful race—owing their illustrious name to their own personal merits—grandsons of simple merchants of wool and silk, as they were. It being so, to form an alliance with the King of France was a great honour for them. Francis I., in his turn, discovered in such marriage a principle of personal influence in Italy. Beside her dowry of golden ducats, Catherine de' Medici brought the duchy of Urbino as a heritage, and perhaps eventually even the grand-duchy of Tuscany; and that which was still more important to the French monarch, her pretensions to Reggio, Modena, Pisa, Leghorn, Parma, and Placentia.

The chronicler Martin du Bellay, in thus recapitulating the very considerable advantages the Italian princess brought with her, relates that, when the treasurers of France complained to the Marshal Strozzi of the slenderness of the dowry, the marshal replied: "True, the dowry is small, the money-weight is not great; but you forget that Madame Catherine brings also three rings of inestimable value—the lordship of Genoa, the duchy of Milan, and the kingdom of Naples." Words which could only be taken in a figurative and hopeful sense, for Catherine de' Medici had no serious legal right over those seignories; only the marshal wished to say that, by this alliance with the Pope and the Medici, Francis I. morally resumed his position in Italy, and that he therein recovered all the pretensions of the house of Valois.

Charles V., deeply affected likewise by this marriage, bent all his efforts to hinder it; with this object he strove to oppose the Sforzas to the Medici, and gave with his own hand one of his nieces to that vigorous condottieri of the Milanese—Francis Sforza, belonging also to a self-made family. The emperor next turned towards the Duke of Savoy, that guardian of the Alps, and offered him also an alliance with his family; for Charles V. saw clearly that Francis I. had not abandoned his cherished Italy, and that the new policy, therefore,

Catherine de' Medici at Fontainebleau was like Italy stretching forth its hands to France; the Pope became the king's ally, just as one sees in the great mosaic at Rome where Pope Adrian is stretching forth his hand to Charlemagne. Francis I. too was smiling upon Italy as in pleasing remembrance of his earliest and brightest years of enjoyment. Still, the individual position of Catherine de' Medici in this new court was necessarily one of extreme delicacy. The young Florentine found the Duke of Orleans making open love to Diana of Poitiers; and, strangest of all, Catherine de' Medici, who was scarcely eighteen, found herself placed in rivalry with a favourite of more than thirty-five, so lovely, however, that it was believed magical arts alone could have preserved those unchanged features and that youthful freshness which excited the admiration of Rosso del Rosso and Primaticcio.

Although a girl in years, Catherine was already old in heart; and her unexpected elevation, instead of satisfying, had merely served to increase that love of power and domination which her after career so fatally developed. With a subtle tact derived from her Italian nature, Catherine de' Medici sedulously avoided giving the slightest jar to the then existing state of things: she manifested neither spite nor anger, for she had endured similar spectacles at Florence, and had become accustomed to those duplex amours and divided affections. A stranger in France, thrown into the midst of an unknown world, her object was to please everybody, to associate herself in the pleasures of a delightful court, to introduce therein novel diversions after the Italian fashion, to ingratiate herself above all with Francis I., already ailing, and whom a premature old age menaced alike in his ambition as in his pleasures. The king divided his time between Fontainebleau, Amboise, and Saint-Germain. Catherine de' Medici followed him everywhere, without showing at first the slightest preference between Diana of Poitiers and the Duchess d'Etampes, contenting herself with smiling upon both, and making for herself a select circle out of that general court, in which each courtier should have his lady and his love. Brantome, full of his recollections of that time, tells us in his quaint

way, that the king was very desirous, as he and his sons had avowed mistresses, that his courtiers should follow their example "And if they did not do so," says Brantome, "he considered them coxcombs and fools" To enhance the splendour and gaiety of his court, Francis I had earnestly sought to attract thither all the principal nobility of France, by educating as pages therein young gentlemen from all the provinces, by adorning it with nearly two hundred ladies belonging to the greatest families in the kingdom, and by establishing it in the splendid palaces of Fontainebleau and Saint Germain, which he had either built or beautified on the banks of the Seine, and sometimes in the spacious castles of Blois and Amboise, which his predecessors had inhabited on the banks of the Loire Thus the court that welcomed the subtle Italian princess was then the most magnificent, the most elegant, the most joyous, and, it must be confessed, one of the most lax in Europe* Still retaining certain military customs of the Middle Ages, and at the same time patronizing the intellectual pursuits of the time of the *renaissance*, it was half chivalric and half literary, —mingling tournaments with studies, hunting with erudition, mental achievements with bodily exercises, the ancient and rough games of skill and strength with the novel and refined pleasures of the arts

Catherine de' Medici ardently strove to render herself agreeable to a courtly circle eager for everything like a novel pleasure Francis I had admitted her into the *petite bande de ses dames favorites*,† with whom he used to hunt the stag, and frequently entertain joyously in his pleasure houses She rode her courser boldly through the forests beside the king, in his hunting and other sports, and was the first to invent stirrups of an elegant form, adapted to give a firmer and more graceful seat to a woman riding sidewise on horseback With Diana of Poitiers and the Duchess d'Etampes on either side of her, she gave them an example of courage and address in the management of their fiery palfreys Each halt of the chase was made to imitate a Florentine fête or a

* Michelet, "Histoire de Marie Stuart" † Brantome, vol. v., pp. 34, 35

Venetian soir e—delightful reminiscences of Italy. There were also dramatic representations, spectacles in which fire and water mingled their attractiveness to the gaze, and the best music procurable ravished the ear. Catherine warmly patronizing Primaticcio and Benvenuto Cellini, drew after them all the artistic talent of Italy for the embellishment of these f tes. The gardens were decorated like the scenes of a theatre; and love-devices and cyphers alternating with the grotesque salamander, the badge of Francis I., were everywhere intermingled. Some of these salamander ornaments are still to be seen scattered through the chateaux of Amboise and Blois; and one poor, solitary instance is to be found on the flank of a time-corroded stone beneath a low arch in one of the courts of Fontainebleau. It is noticed by few who visit that royal abode, while wandering through the deserted gardens originally designed by Primaticcio.

Such then was the circle of beauty and enjoyment in which Francis I. passed his leisure hours, and they, indeed, comprised no small portion of his entire existence; while the manner in which his household was constituted, tended rather to increase than diminish the pernicious effects of such association.

And in the midst of this vain, and eager, and voluptuous throng of sycophantic courtiers, who acknowledged no law but the will of the monarch, and no religion save his pleasure, were congregated the most noble and the most beautiful women of whom France could boast. The circle of the queen had been formed from that of Louise of Savoy; while the court of Marguerite of Navarre, during her frequent visits to her royal brother, was composed of wit, fascination, and gallantry. Catherine de' Medici had been followed to France by a train of ladies equally attractive and equally facile, and thus it will cease to be a subject of surprise that, ere long, purity and virtue were not only disregarded, but even made the common theme of sarcasm and contempt.

We dare not venture to comment on this frightful cha-

racteristic of the reign of Francis I, though truth compels the fact to be recorded

We have spoken of Diana of Poitiers as a formidable rival, at this strangely constituted court, to the Duchess d'Etampes, but said little touching her early life. She was the daughter of the Seigneur de St Vallier in Dauphny, a brave and hardy captain of a hundred men-at arms, whose castle stood high above the Rhone, amongst those steep mountains of the Vivarais, where its scarped rock-based foundations may still be seen. The Sire de St Vallier was blessed with a young daughter of singular beauty, to whom he had given the name of Diana. When scarcely six years old, she rode on horseback and followed the chase with her father, and knew how to fly her falcon and sparrowhawk with wonderful dexterity. At ten years of age she was promised in marriage to Louis de Brézé, Count de Maulevrier. Louis de Brézé, grand seneschal of Normandy, was descended illegitimately from Charles VII, his mother being that King's daughter by his high-minded favourite, Agnes Sorel. He had received from the gentle Agnes the name of Maulevrier, on account of his untameable love for the chase, for even as a child, he was already a formidable destroyer of game, and truly worshipped Diana reproduced under the attributes of the goddess of the woods. The Brézés were descended from an ancient Norman race, and the nuptials of Diana of Poitiers with Louis de Brézé were celebrated almost in the midst of war. For the Count de Saint-Vallier would not quit the Constable de Bourbon, at the head as he was of his men at arms, and his most faithful counsellor. A comrade in the battles of Bayard, of Gaston de Foix, and De la Palisse, he had fought in the wars of Italy with La Tremouille and Lautrec—a brilliant chivalry which, after having followed Louis XII, went to rally about the newly acceded Francis I, like the paladins grouped around Charlemagne. A generation full of marvels and great deeds of war, which Francis I was fain to satisfy by victories and distant conquests.

Diana's marriage with Louis de Brézé took place in

1514, when the bridegroom had already attained the age of fifty-five, and bore about him many honourable scars, which, however they might tend to enhance his glory as a soldier, were by no means calculated to increase his personal attractions in the eyes of a young and beautiful girl. Nor was the home to which he conveyed the new-made countess more consistent with her age and habits than its master. The gloomy castle of Anet (pompously designated the Palace of the Kings of Navarre, because the domain had originally formed a portion of the territories appertaining to the two sovereigns), admirably as it was situated in a fertile valley, watered by the rival rivers of the Eure and the Vesgre, and backed by the magnificent forest of Dreux, was in itself dark, melancholy, and isolated. It consisted of a heavy square mass of masonry, pierced on each of its sides by two rows of lancet windows deeply sunk in the stonework, and flanked at either corner by strong and lofty towers; the whole of the edifice was surrounded by a battlemented wall, and encircled by a moat, the only mode of access being by a drawbridge, which communicated with a single entrance-gate, opening upon the court within. The interior of Anet was in keeping with its outward appearance—dark oaken panellings, grim-touched portraits of departed worthies, long and chill galleries, where the lightest footfall awoke mysterious echoes. These were the unattractive features of the bridal house of the mere girl whom the Grand Seneschal had won from her smiling birth-place in Dauphiny.

Diana, who was destined to play so prominent a part during two successive reigns, was, as we have said, the daughter of the Count de St. Vallier, representative of one of the most ancient families of Dauphiny, and of Jeanne de Batarnay, and was born on the 3rd of September, 1499; while her husband, Louis de Brézé, was the grandson, on the mother's side, of Charles VII. and Agnes Sorel—a circumstance which, at that period, was considered greatly to enhance his personal dignity, whatever prejudice might be attached to it in our own times. At the period of her father's con-

demnation, as an accomplice in the defection of the constable Bourbon, Diana had passed her twenty-third year, but she had spent her early life in an unbroken calm, which still invested her with all the charms that enslave Nature had endowed her alike with beauty and with intellect, and as she moved through the sombre saloons of Anet like a spirit of light, the elderly Seneschal blessed the day upon which he had secured such a vision of loveliness to gladden the close of his otherwise monotonous life. The aged and uxorious husband terminated his existence in 1531, but before that period Diana had had to tremble for the fate of her father, who lay under sentence of death for treason. Violently reproaching the Seneschal for having been the cause of betraying the Count to the scaffold, in spite of every remonstrance, she resolutely set out from Anet for the court of Francis, and at the feet of that gallant and impressible monarch pleaded in tears for her parent's pardon. What passed during that memorable interview was never known as matter of history. But this much is certain—the powerful intercession of Diana saved her father's life. The writers of the time put different interpretations upon the clemency of the king. Suffice it that the Count de St Vallier was reprieved upon the very scaffold,* and that Madame de Brézé remained at court, where she became the inspiring theme of the muse of Marot, who has succeeded, by the various poems which he wrote in her honour, and of which the sense is far from equivocal, in creating a suspicion that it was not long ere she became reconciled, not only to the manners, but also to the vices of the licentious court in which, thereafter, she made herself so notoriously conspicuous. Some historians acquit her of having paid, by the forfeiture of her virtue, for the life of her father, from the fact that, in the patent by which his sentence was remitted, no mention is made of her personal intercession, and that his pardon was attributed to that of

* It is recorded of St. Vallier that on this occasion such was the effect upon him of terror of an ignominious death, that his hair became perfectly white during the night preceding the day fixed for his execution and so changed was his appearance in the morning, that his astonished gaolers fancied another person had been substituted for their prisoner.

the Grand Seneschal himself, and others of his relatives and friends ; but it appears scarcely probable that Francis would, under any circumstances, have been guilty of the indelicacy of involving her in public disgrace, aware, as he necessarily must have been, of the suspicion which was attached to every young and beautiful woman to whom he accorded any marked favour or protection. Had her life, moreover, been pure and exemplary, and had she, after obtaining the pardon of her father, withdrawn once more into retirement, posterity would have been at no loss to form a correct and worthy judgment of her conduct ; but the vain and willing idol of a depraved poet, and the voluntary seductress of a prince who had scarcely reached half her own age, must be content to leave her memory at least clouded by doubt and darkened by suspicion.

Diana, pleading at the feet of the king for the life of a parent, succeeding in her sublime mission, and subsequently dedicating her youth to the solace of that parent's sufferings, would have ranked among the noblest of examples of female virtue and heroism ; but Diana of Poitiers, the frivolous votary of courtly pleasures, and the mature mistress of a boy-prince, excites only disgust, distrust, and contempt ; and as we trace her downward course step by step, we scarcely care to ascertain by whom she was first led into the path of evil.

In 1536, whilst the court was at Amboise, a grand tournament was provided for the amusement of the king's sister Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, and held in the great court of the castle. Not only the princes, but even the king himself, had in turn taken their places in the lists, and the Duke of Angoulême, the younger son, had particularly distinguished himself by his prowess. The fatigues that he had undergone in the lists, and his consequent exhaustion, induced the young prince to swallow a large goblet of spiced wine a few moments before the king rose from the supper-table ; and the insidious draught acted the more potently upon him, from the fact that he had previously pledged the flatterers, by whom he was surrounded, with more than

sufficient vigour In this state of excitement, he no sooner ascertained from one of the chamberlains that the king had retired to his apartments, than he rose abruptly from his seat, exclaiming to a group of wild young courtiers who were in attendance upon him—"Now then, gentlemen, his majesty is safe for the night, and we are the lords of Amboise Let us go and take the air upon the bridge, and see if we cannot thrash some of the rascally lackeys, who amuse themselves by stopping up the thoroughfare, and striking those who thrust them aside"

The proposal met with unanimous applause, and the hot-headed prince and his equally wild companions at once sallied from the castle, and rushed upon the lounging group on the bridge, who, being in the service of the court, and many among them even in that of the king himself, all carried arms The darkness of the night rendered it impossible to recognise their assailants, and consequently, when the Duke d'Angoulême, at the head of his little party, fell upon them sword in hand, they defended themselves vigorously, while, as he persisted in retaining his position, he soon became the principal object of attack, until at length a stroke was aimed at him with so sure a hand, that M^r de Castelnau, a Gascon noble and one of his favourite minions, had only time to throw himself between the duke and his antagonist, and to receive the blow intended for his master, at whose feet he fell dead upon the instant At once sobered and horror stricken at the result of his imprudence, the young prince shouted imperiously, "Put up your swords, gentlemen I am the Duke d'Angoulême!"

In order to dissipate the annoyance which he felt at this disgraceful adventure, and, if possible, to overcome the gloom which the fate of a friend to whom he had been greatly attached had shed over the spirits of the young prince, the king, after having severely reprimanded his son, removed with the court to Chambord, and it was probably the dread which he felt lest the hitherto lively youth should belie the promise of his boyhood, that led him to observe, even more closely than ever, the demeanour of his other

sons. On one occasion, as he was leaning over the balcony of the great hall, watching the three princes, who were engaged at tennis in the court below, he turned suddenly towards the Grande Sénéchale, who was standing near him, and motioning her to advance, he directed her attention to the listlessness with which the Duke d'Angoulême was pursuing the game.

"I scarcely recognise him," he said, with a sigh; "his natural enthusiasm is quenched. Even the Dauphin exhibits more excitement."

"Give him time, sire," replied Diana of Poitiers, soothingly. "He is young, and he has lost a friend. The prince loved M. de Castelnau."

"Doubtless you are right, madame," acquiesced the king: "at least you are an admirable consoler, and I dare not doubt your words. He is young; and we know that time cures all evils."

"Not all, sire."

Francis looked at her steadfastly.

"You are right again, madame: not all. There are certain evils which time and memory can only canker, and others for which it affords no hope. You see the Dauphin? Time fails to make a Frenchman of the Spaniard."

"Monseigneur is grave beyond his years, assuredly, sire," said Madame de Brézé; "but his mind is all nobleness."

"And Henry, madame? what will you say of Henry?" asked the king, almost peevishly. "For my own part, I despair of him. Since his marriage he has become more unsocial and impracticable than ever."

"Surely your majesty did not anticipate that a wife would render him more frank and joyous?" said Diana, with a slight accent of sarcasm. "For the Duke of Orleans there was no cure but love."

"Aha! is it so, fair Diana?" asked Francis, suddenly roused into excitement; "then we have committed a fatal error, for I fear that love and marriage are too frequently incompatible."

The beautiful widow was silent.

"Catherine is, however, handsome enough to animate a statue," pursued the king; "it can scarcely be difficult to love her."

"True," said Madame de Brézé, with an arch look, "but love cannot be compelled; make it a duty, and it turns to loathing."

"He is, then, irreclaimable?"

"By no means. A sincere and ardent passion would arouse him from his present apathy; for none love more deeply than those who resist moral coercion."

"On the faith of a gentleman, you possess more wisdom, madame, handsome as you are," exclaimed Francis, energetically, "than all the doctors of the Sorbonne. I only wish that some one as fair and as fascinating as yourself would undertake his conversion. I should be her debtor beyond requital."

"The experiment might at least be tried," murmured Diana, twisting her pearl chatelaine about her taper fingers.

"But by whom?" asked the king. "For such an undertaking it would require a miracle to insure success. If, indeed, *you* could be prevailed upon to sacrifice yourself—"

"Your majesty does not possess a more devoted servant than Diana of Poitiers."

"I know it, madame, I know it," said Francis, as a strange expression passed over his face; "and I am equally aware that you, at least, could not fail: but perhaps the past—"

"Do you fear, sire," asked the Grande Sénéchale, with an ironical smile, "that the memory of M. de Brézé—?"

The king forced an uneasy laugh as he hastily replied, notwithstanding the conclusion of her inquiry, "I have no such apprehension, fair lady; therefore let the old Seneschal rest in peace. We will revert no more to bygone years,—nothing is so idle as retrospection; while as regards the future, I do not for a moment doubt your power, and only wish that it could be successfully exerted."

"Your wishes are my law, sire," was the rejoinder of the fair widow, as her rich lips parted in affected merriment.

ment ; “ but Madame d’Etampes is approaching, and I will no longer intrude upon your majesty.”

“ The duchess is jealous,” said the royal libertine, as he acknowledged her parting curtsy, “ and we must not violate the proprieties at Chambord. I will not detain you, Madame la Grande Sénéchale.” And as Diana moved away, the favourite advanced to the balcony,—a liberty upon which the neglected queen would have feared to venture.

At this period the widow of Louis de Brézé had already attained her thirty-seventh year, while the Prince Henry was only in his seventeenth ; and at the first glance it would appear as though so formidable a disparity of age must have rendered any attempt on her part to engage the affections of so mere a youth alike abortive and ridiculous ; but so perfectly had she preserved even the youthful bloom which had added so much to her attractions on her first appearance at court, that she appeared ten years younger than she actually was. Her features were regular and classical ; her complexion faultless ; her hair of a rich purple black, which took a golden tint in the sunshine ; while her teeth, her ankle, her hands and arms, and her bust, were each in their turn the theme of the court poets. That the extraordinary and almost fabulous duration of her beauty was in a great degree due to the precautions which she adopted, there can be little doubt, for she spared no effort to secure it. She was jealously careful of her health, and in the most severe weather bathed in cold water ; she suffered no cosmetic to approach her, denouncing every compound of the kind as worthy only of those to whom Nature had been so niggard as to compel them to complete her imperfect work ; she rose every morning at six o’clock, and had no sooner left her chamber than she sprang into the saddle, and after having galloped a league or two, returned to her couch, whereon she remained until mid-day engaged in reading. Her system appears a singular one, but in her case it undoubtedly proved successful, as, after having enslaved the Duke of Orleans in her thirty-seventh year, she still reigned in absolute sovereignty over the heart of that King of France when she had

nearly reached the age of sixty. It is certain, however, that the magnificent Diana owed no small portion of this extraordinary and unprecedented constancy to the charms of her mind and the brilliancy of her intellect.

The short dialogue between Francis and herself which we have given above inspired the ambitious widow with new ideas and aspirations. Hitherto she had been content to wait a reaction in the heart of Francis himself. She did not believe that the Duchess d'Etampes could long conceal from him the extent of her profligacy, and well aware that, should the favourite be disgraced, her successor would soon be determined, she contented herself by exerting all her fascinations against the frail heart of the monarch, and watching for the hour of her own triumph.

The few sentences which had passed in the balcony, however, had sufficed to open up a new career before her. That the king had spoken rather in a bitter mirth than in sober seriousness she was well aware, but this conviction failed to shake her purpose. The saturnine and forbidding nature of the Duke of Orleans, moreover, rendered the task which she was about to undertake one of no common difficulty, but this very consciousness piqued her vanity, and determined her to persevere.

The prince was at first annoyed, and even abashed, at the undisguised preference exhibited towards him by the most beautiful woman at court, but Diana soon succeeded in subjugating his heart through his vanity. Conscious that he possessed neither the dignity of the Dauphin nor the frank gracefulness of his younger brother Charles, Henry of Orleans had hitherto carefully avoided the society of the opposite sex, and had even received the hand of his wife with a marked repugnance, which had drawn upon him the displeasure of the king, but he soon found that there was no resisting the seductions of the siren, who, while she looked into his face with the brightest smile and the most brilliant eyes in the world, discovered in himself a thousand estimable qualities and personal attractions to which he had never dreamt he could advance any claim.

What effect the triumph of Madame de Brézé over the heart of the prince produced upon the mind of the king, the old chronicler who dilates complaisantly upon all the preceding details does not inform us, but the impression which it made upon the Duchess d'Etampes soon became apparent, and was destined to exert a most unhappy influence over the fortunes of the nation. The first weapon which the haughty favourite wielded against the mature mistress of the young duke was that of ridicule. She affected to discredit the report that Henry of Orleans could be enthralled by the antiquated charms of a "wrinkled old woman;" and in support of her arguments, amused herself by asserting that she was born the same year in which the daughter of St. Vallier had espoused the Grand Seneschal of Normandy. Of course she found many and attentive auditors, not one of whom attempted to disprove her words, although all were aware that Madame de Brézé was the senior of the duchess only by seven years. She next attacked the person of her victim, forewarning those who were bold enough to uphold her claims to admiration, that the beauty of which she was so vain was known to be the result of sorcery, and that they would ere long see it vanish as mysteriously as it had been bestowed. Diana, however, was not to be conquered by means so puerile as these; and secure of the affections and support of the prince, she treated the calumnies of her persecutor with disdain.

The temper of the Duchess d'Etampes was ill calculated to brook this tacit assumption of superiority; and foiled in her efforts to rid herself of the intrusive beauty by her own agency, she carried her vindictiveness so far as to demand of the king that he should exile Madame de Brézé from the court; but Francis, who had already begun to congratulate himself upon the altered deportment of the duke, which he attributed entirely to the influence exerted over him by Diana, refused to accede to her wishes; reminding her that while the Duchess of Orleans uttered no complaint, and continued to exhibit towards the Grande Sénéchale the same consideration and regard as ever, it was impossible that he could

interfere to prevent the progress of the *liaison*. Not even this declaration could, however, discourage the pertinacious favourite, who thenceforward studiously avoided all reference to Diana herself, but strenuously endeavoured to disparage the duke in the eyes of his royal father, drawing invidious comparisons between that prince and the Dauphin, and seeking by every means in her power to crush his rapidly increasing favour.

It must not, nevertheless, be supposed that, although Madame de Brezé preserved sufficient self command to exhibit nothing save contempt towards the vindictive duchess, she did not acutely feel and bitterly resent the sarcasms of which she had been made the subject. Jealous of the superior power of the royal mistress, and exasperated by her insults, even while she displayed worldly wisdom enough patiently to abide her time of vengeance, her heart was to the full as much agitated by hatred as that of Anne de Pisseleu herself, and a conviction that such must in reality be the case once more divided the court into two separate factions, which the doubtful aspect of public affairs alone tended to render for a time innoxious.

But the sway of the imperious favourite was destined to come to a close in 1547, by the somewhat sudden death of her royal protector. Francis, soured and morose, his intellect clouded and debased by a painful malady, the result of his licentious habits, and which had undermined his constitution, breathed his last at the chateau of Rambouillet in the spring of that year. With all his failings—and they were many—Francis, when we consider the state in which he left his kingdom—augmented in territory, resources, and renown—must undoubtedly be ranked amongst the greatest of the French monarchs. The title of “The Father of Letters and the Arts,” by which this prince is popularly known in history, points to another and a nobler sphere of action, in which he signally merited the admiration and gratitude of France and of the civilized world. Francis was an energetic and munificent promoter of that great intellectual revival which was one of the most memorable characteristics of his age. He was a friend, protector, and patron of the learned Budé, or

Budæus, the first Greek scholar of his day ; of Scaliger, and of the famous printer, Robert Stephens ; of the satirist, Rabelais, and the Calvinist poet, Clement Marot ; of the painters, Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, Salviati, and Primaticcio ; of the sculptors, Benvenuto Cellini and Jean Goujon. The public edifices of the reign are so many splendid monuments of the glories of the Renaissance. France owes to the munificence of Francis, and the skill and taste of his artists, the sumptuous palaces of Fontainebleau, St. Germain, and Chambord ; and the smaller but exquisitely elegant châteaux of Chenonceaux, Azay-le-Rideaux, Villers-Cotterets, and Anet.

Diana of Poitiers, who during the reign of Francis had only played a secondary part in the French court, now saw its courtiers, of whatever faction, flock eagerly round her ; for her undivided influence not only equalled, but overbalanced all the rest. Henry II., her lover, then in his twenty-ninth year, was a prince of dull understanding and feeble character. His sole accomplishment consisted in a remarkable expertness in bodily exercises, and over him Madame de Brézé, arrived at the mature age of forty-eight, but who had wonderfully preserved her distinguished beauty, now exercised an almost absolute ascendant. In fact, from this time the royal favourite reigned in France under Henry's name. The first use she made of her power was to procure the exile of the Duchess d'Etampes, whom, however, she generously allowed to retain all her possessions, contenting herself with depriving of their appointments those who owed them to the favour of her rival. Diana, indeed, soon wrought a sweeping change in every department—in the council, ministry, and parliament. The Constable himself even could not preserve his power and dignity, save by paying submissive court to the potent favourite. In 1548, the king having bestowed upon her for life the duchy of Valentinois, she thenceforward took the title of Duchess of Valentinois. She obtained also from Henry the gift of the "right of confirmation." This was a lucrative privilege, which, before the establishment of the *paulette*, compelled

all those who held posts in France to pay a fine to be confirmed in their tenure on the accession of each king to the throne. This last favour, which Francis I. had only granted to his mother, caused the people to murmur. Diana employed the funds derived from that monarch's liberality upon the embellishment of the chateau of Anet, which the punsters of the day henceforward nicknamed *Dianet*. Philibert Delorme superintended the architectural details; and after the lapse of three centuries, Anet still retains, at the present day, the reputation for exquisite design then accorded to it.

The privilege of Diana of Poitiers, like that of the Marquise de Pompadour during her sway, was to have fostered painting and sculpture, and the arts of design, and to have presided during an epoch of grandeur and of a general renovation of the arts. All glory, alas! is fugitive, but the fostering protection accorded to art and science survives every other; and thus the names of Leonardo da Vinci, del Rosso, Primaticcio, and Benvenuto Cellini, are interwoven with the memory of the beauty and courtly grace of Diana of Poitiers.

Even at the present day, upon the façades of the monuments of the Renaissance, upon the fluted columns of Anet, over the elaborately sculptured doors of Amboise, over the artistically designed chimneys of Chambord, at Fontainebleau or in the Louvre, may be seen the cypher of Diana of Poitiers interlaced with the initials of Henry II.; for it was especially during the short reign of that monarch that Diana of Poitiers had greatest sway; under Francis I. her overt power was almost wholly neutralized by the cold, capricious beauty, the Duchess d'Etampes, some twenty years younger than herself.

Under King Henry II., Diana of Poitiers, still beautiful, though mature of years, ruled by her fascinations a young and chivalrous king; the huntress Diana, such as Primaticcio has depicted her in his mysterious thickets, with quiver on shoulder and hounds in leash, may suggest something of the marvellous beauty of his patroness, Diana of Poitiers.

The true Renaissance, with its firm and defined character, was only developed in France under the reign of Henry II., though it has erroneously been attributed to that of Francis I. exclusively. Catherine de' Medici and Diana of Poitiers were the great patronesses of reviving art, and it is to those two intellects—the one wholly Florentine, the other wholly French—that we owe some of its finest monuments. They both patronized German Pilon and Philibert Delorme, and each extended a hand to that poor and bravely struggling potter and wonderful artist, Bernard Palissy, whose works, so highly prized at the present day, dazzle our eyes alike by their curious design and marvellous colours.

The age of Diana, which made her empire over the heart of Henry appear so extraordinary, led some of her contemporaries to believe that she had recourse to sorcery to enthrall him; and the old story of the enchanted ring of Charlemagne was revived for the occasion by her traducers. Certain grave writers, such as Theodore de Beza and Pasquier, have not scrupled to adopt this vulgar superstition; and the latter even sought to prove the fact by adducing instances of its practice. The actual magic of Diana was the fascination of a superior mind, versatile talents, and brilliant personal graces. The praises of the *beaux esprits* whom she patronized prove that she was alive to the charms of poetry and elegant literature; for the Muses deign to offer their incense to those only who can appreciate its odour; and it is clear that it was not gratitude solely which inspired the verses of Du Bellay, De Ronsard, and De Pelletier. In art also she evinced an exquisite taste and judgment; and that she liberally fostered some of its peculiar developments, we have had an opportunity of observing in the rare specimens of the famous pottery known as "*Faïence de Henri Deux*," or of "*Diane de Poitiers*," lately exhibited among the *Collection of Objects on Loan* at the South Kensington Museum. This was apparently the pottery *de luxe* of the brilliant courts of Francis I. and Henry II., as evidenced by the cyphers, armorial bearings, &c., which occur on so many specimens. Not only is the style of ornamen-

tation precisely that of the prevalent and most beautiful French Renaissance of that period, but the exact period is confirmed by the fact that a considerable proportion of the specimens were actually made for Henry II and Diana; inasmuch as that king's well known monogram, the H and the ambiguous double D (or H interlaced with crescents), may be seen on so much of the ware. There are fifty-five pieces of this curious and exquisite pottery known to be extant—in England twenty five, in France twenty-nine, and one in Russia—all apparently from the hand of the original artist, with the exception of two or three specimens, the work of perhaps a relative or pupil, whose labours, from their marked inferiority, had no success. It has excited the keenest interest and curiosity amongst amateurs and collectors for twenty or thirty years past, and, in consequence, its pecuniary value has attained a fabulous ratio, very far beyond that of any other variety of decorated pottery, but nothing is known with certainty respecting either the producer or the place of its origin.

Neither the youth nor beauty of Catherine could withdraw her consort from the fascinations of Diana, notwithstanding her advanced age. The queen remained throughout their union neglected and without authority. For twenty-two years the sway of the dominant and only favourite lasted, unassailed and unbroken, until the catastrophe occurred which deprived France of a king and Diana of a faithful lover. At the celebration of the nuptials of Henry's sister, the Princess Marguerite, with the Duke of Savoy, in 1559, the king, whilst tilting with Montgomery, captain of his Scottish guards, was struck in the eye by a fragment of that stout knight's lance, which, penetrating the brain, ultimately caused death after eleven days of intense suffering. Diana never quitted the king while life remained, but immediately after his decease she retired to Anet, where she died some six years afterwards, having retained her singular beauty and vigour of frame to the latest period of her existence.



CHAPTER V.

HENRY OF VALOIS AND THE MINIONS.

THE term "minion" has happily become so obsolete and inapplicable in the present state of society, as to require probably a word of explanation. Though the term is of French origin, the class of men to whom it was first applied were not natives of that country. The prototype, strictly speaking, will be found among those young nobles who, in the sixteenth century, abandoned the soft clime of Italy to accompany the court of the Louvre the youthful bride of Henry—the lively and quick-witted Catherine de' Medici. To first flocked to Paris in her train those dainty Italians, a remarkable for their regular features, tufted beards, carefully curled locks, redolent of the costliest unguents; their effeminate costume, their frivolous and disorderly and manners by turns haughty and obsequious. While the and dissipated denizens of the court and city welcomed the ultramontanes with enthusiasm, the mass of the people looked upon them with scorn and defiance, and expressed their sentiments in the refrain—

"Italien, qui que tu sois,
Qui viens t'enrichir aux dépens des François,
Toi qui te sers de muguet parfumé,
Prochainement tu seras enfumé."

And well did the Parisian burghers *prochainement* keep promise contained in the last line.

But ere long, infected by these foreign fopperies,

even to his nobles, he sought to isolate himself altogether from state affairs ; admitting to his presence only certain youthful favourites—scions of noble houses, chosen for their handsome mien, rare fashion in dress, reputation for gallantry—and who were contemptuously called his *minions*. Languidly reclining upon the cushions of a gilded chalupe, and surrounded by these familiars, he passed the greater part of the day enjoying the breeze upon the Saône, as he had lately done among the lagunes at Venice, wholly given up to the *dolce far niente*. At dinner his table was surrounded by a balustrade, in order that the courtiers might not approach too near him ; and the repast finished, he hurriedly received a few petitions, as he passed out of the hall, and hastened to shut himself up again with his crew of parasites. It cannot, therefore, be wondered at that the nobility who had flocked to Lyons to welcome their new king soon took their departure thoroughly disgusted.

The marked change observable in the manners and amusements of the court of France at this period must undoubtedly be attributed to the policy and influence of Catherine de' Medici. All France was then a battle-field. Perhaps the universal soldiership of the nation may be traced to this ferocious age, when no man's life was safe unless by the strength of his own arm ; fighting, robbery, waylaying being the occupation of high and low. The politic and intriguing queen-mother, who, after patiently submitting for twenty years to the paramount influence of Diana of Poitiers, had since swayed supreme the sceptre of her three sons, succeeded in banishing the rough but manly sport of the tourney, in which her husband had lost his life, and introducing the *Carrousel**—an importation from Italy—instead ; running at the ring, tennis, and bilboquet ; thinking it desirable to refrigerate somewhat the hot blood which then coursed so feverishly through the veins of the French noblesse. Cost what it might, some outlet must be found for that fierceness

* A military game, consisting of a series of exercises on horseback, executed in quadrilles, and intermixed with allegorical and other emblems drawn from fable or history.

of the national spirit which required distraction, she thought, from the rough trade of war, and Catherine therefore looked with a favouring eye upon every sort of court fete devoted to amusements of a gentler character—the chase alone remaining in fashion of all the other old feudal sports among the courtiers. They had too long turned their swords against each other's breasts, and the queen mother seemed to say to these fiery champions of both parties, Leaguer and Huguenot, "Here are abodes of love and repose offered to you, brave and noble warriors, who have too long dealt in strife and bloodshed." And with such designs she promoted that continued festivity, in which courtly dissipation was mingled with religious pomp and superstition, after the Italian mode, and which gave such a peculiar impress to the habits and manners of her time.

Such, at least, is the opinion of those who are the apologists of the policy of the crafty Catherine. To us her motive seems abundantly clear—the necessity she felt of amusing the minds of her sons to prevent them from paying attention to state affairs, in order that she might guide them herself and rule entirely uncontrolled.

Nothing could exceed the extravagance and luxury in dress on the occasion of these banquets, ballets, and festivals. Nor is it surprising that the duties of the toilette should now be considered as all important, when it is recorded that the sovereign himself would spend whole days in devising new fashions, that he would cut out his wife's robes and his own, as well as perform the office of hairdresser both to her and his effeminate favourites, who, following his example, wore their hair turned over a comb, like women, and were often seen winding silk, stringing beads, and embroidering. The care and adornment of his own person occupied the chief part of the day. His hands were covered every night with gloves, and a cloth dipped in essence was laid over his face, in order to improve the delicacy of his complexion, his hair was always frizzed with the greatest care, and dyed of a beautiful black, whole hours were passed in giving the proper shade to the red and white of his cheeks, and painting

his eyebrows. His dress, on any great occasion, was so covered with pearls, precious stones, and embroidery, as almost to conceal the cloth of gold of which it was generally formed; and as at this period nobody was permitted to appear at more than one fête in the same costume, the enormous sums lavished on dress are quite incalculable.

In that clever picture of these times, entitled "Catherine de' Medici; or, the Queen-mother," we have the portrait of one of her minions sketched *ad unguem*. The epithet which Count Boniface la Mole had acquired, of *Le Baladin de la Cour*, did not raise him much in the estimation of sober-minded persons, and he was looked upon by the better part of the community as the very impersonation of profligacy and effeminacy. This accomplished ornament of the most unprincipled court in Europe might be seen sauntering on in the train of the queen-mother, carefully avoiding any indication of interest in a ceremonial which perhaps absorbed the attention of every one else, but looking from side to side with an air of profound indifference, occasionally lifting from his side, where it depended, a small mirror in a gold frame, which, though till lately an appendage of the female toilette, he had newly introduced as an ornament among the fops of the period. His attire bespoke the utmost care and consideration, and proclaimed the high importance attached to his character: the most faultless propriety reigned throughout, and the *ensemble* was so perfect and so inimitable, that no one portion of the elaborate finish shone out more conspicuously than the rest. In his ears he wore rings of rubies, with drops of pearl; his hair was curled, turned back, and fastened with combs; the hat he negligently held was adorned with an aigrette of diamonds, and from the front hung over the forehead, when worn, a profusion of little ornaments, in a fringe of various-coloured gems, which shook at every movement of the head. His beard was long and pointed—a mode very dear to him, as he was conscious of the peculiarly fine growth of that imposing appendage, in which particular, as some of the nobles could not vie with him, a few followed the example of Henry III., whose beard was worn short, and

whose hair was dyed of whatever colour pleased him for the time. On his white uncovered hand sparkled numerous small rings, from which, as he occasionally waved his fringed handkerchief or pointed to some object, a stream of odour issued, the hollow of each ring being filled with musk. His short mantle was of rich silk, gorgeously embroidered in an antique pattern of gold and jewels, with devices and mottoes intermixed with its scrolls and foliage, his throat displayed a necklace of pearls, with clasps of sapphire surrounded by sparks of diamonds, a high transparent ruff shaded the back of his neck, and a double collar of the same light texture, covered with delicate work, fell on his shoulders. His nether garments were of cloth of gold, the seams and slashes sprinkled and edged with small buttons of jewels of every hue, large bouquets of pearls in his shoes completed his sparkling costume. His remarkably handsome person, added to the ease and grace with which he wore this profusion of ornament, rendered him the most dazzling figure in the train of his royal patroness.

The ladies of a court in which dress was made a matter of such importance would naturally rival their lords in the display of a sumptuous and eccentric attire. Introduced early to the splendours and pleasures of the most gorgeous and profligate court in Europe, Marguerite, the licentious daughter of Catherine and faithless spouse of Henry of Navarre, was well prepared to act her part in its intrigues and dissipations. Her devotion was as ostentatious as her gallantry, she never missed Mass on Sundays and holidays, she was as great a sermon hunter as any in modern times, and her attachment to a popular preacher was scarcely less than that to a favoured lover. Foremost in every folly of fashion, to her was due the introduction of the mode of displaying the neck in an inordinate degree, which she continued in defiance of the admonitions and reprehensions levelled at her from the pulpit. The Jesuit Suffrent thus attacked her — "There is not," said he, "any little coquette in Paris who does not expose her bosom in the fashion of Queen Marguerite." It is amusing to learn

that inventions for increasing the size of the female figure behind, as well as for augmenting it before, and both of which have been renewed in the present age, were common under the last princes of Valois. As early as 1563, treatises were written and satires composed on "basquines" and "vertugalles," the two articles of dress destined to the above-mentioned purposes, and which were the precursors of the more recent contrivances of the hoop, the *cage*, and the crinoline; the latter term being, in England, very incorrectly applied to all three indiscriminately. "Frenchwomen," says the Venetian ambassador Lippomano, in one of his letters, "have very slight waists; they take pleasure in puffing out their robes by means of hoops, which render their figure very elegant. They take pains to procure fine stockings and shoes. They all wear corsets which hook behind, and give a most becoming shape to the bust."

On the day of the espousals of Henry III. and the gentle and pious Princess Louise de Lorraine, the king, we are told, devoted the whole morning to the adornment of his bride elect; and after completing her toilette, by arranging the jewels on her robe with his own hands to his entire satisfaction, he next wasted several hours with the rich suits of his favourites, Quélus, Villequier, and Du Guast. But though the attire worn by Henry on this occasion—a rich suit of white velvet, and a mantle of cloth of silver—was deemed a marvellous display of elaborate taste as well as novelty, yet not only all the young lords of the court, but the king himself, saw themselves eclipsed by the superior fashion of the privileged band of favourites—the royal *mignons*. Early in the reign we find this crew of debauched parasites, to the number of ten, occupying the post of king's chamberlains; and most extraordinary was the immunity and unbounded the license in which these personages indulged. The royal minion, *par excellence*, combined the attributes of the fop, the bully, and the bravo; and from exacting almost servile homage from nobles of superior rank, they filled the courts with broils and fighting, to which they added slander—the reputation of the noblest ladies with impunity,

gambling, and perpetrating fraudulent appropriations of the revenue. Their effeminacy and luxury, on the other hand, when in attendance on their royal master, and in the adornment of their persons, surpassed the most extravagant of antecedents. The feeble and emasculate Henry liked his *protégés* to assume in public the fierce swagger of bravos; while in private, to please the degenerate Valois, they put on the garb of women, curling and scenting their hair, cutting out attire, manufacturing perfumes and cosmetics, singing licentious songs to the accompaniment of guitars or mandolins, or entertaining the royal voluptuary with mendacious tittle-tattle current in the court or city.

In a caustic satire, written by Artus, upon the follies of the court of the Louvre during this reign, we are treated to an amusing account of the ceremonies used at the *lever* of Henry's dainty minions. It has been supposed that De Québus was the personage falling peculiarly under the lash of the satirist.* "On entering the chamber of the royal *mignons*," says he, "I first beheld three cavaliers, whose hair was being seized with hot pincers heated in a chafing-dish, so that their heads were smoking. Such a sight I deemed at first alarming, and was about to cry for succour; but on a closer examination I perceived that no hurt was being inflicted. One of the victims was reading, another joking with his valet, and a third discoursing on philosophy. From this chamber I entered into a second, where I beheld a single cavalier seated helplessly in a chair, and surrounded by several attendants. One was holding before him a mirror; another had a large box of cypress-wood filled with powder, into which he repeatedly plunged a large puff, and powdered the head of his patient. This achieved, a third individual advanced, holding a fine instrument, with which he tore superfluous hairs from his master's eyebrows, leaving an arch clear and defined. In a corner of the room a thick

* On the first appearance of this lively satire it sold at an excessively high price. Henry IV., after reading it, remarked that, although he found it *libre et trop hardi*, he would not allow the author (the Sieur d'Emery) to be prosecuted; considering that he could not conscientiously punish a man for having told the truth.

vapour was rising from a vessel which they called a *sublimatum*, the which being condensed, they brought and applied to the cheeks, lips, forehead, and neck of our victim. Another then came, and kneeling, opened the patient's mouth by gently pulling his beard: then, wetting his finger, he rubbed a white powder on his gums, and from a little box he took some false teeth, and fastened them in wherever there was space. Next, the personage who had coloured our victim's cheeks again approached, and with a brush he painted over his beard, which until now had been of fiery hue, after washing it with perfumed waters and soaps. They then brought silk stockings, and a pair of shoes marvellously small and dainty. During this ceremony, a fourth *valet de chambre* was airing before the fire a shirt adorned with exquisite needlework. This being slipped over our patient's head, the collar was set upright, and his doublet brought, which was so tight that it took all the strength that we could muster to button it."

He then describes how "*cette demie-femme*" was equipped with two pairs of perfumed gloves, handkerchief, rings, chain, a mirror, fan of delicate lacework, a pomander and comfit-boxes, a hat and plumes, and a *sachet*.

Next the author introduces us into the royal bedchamber. Henry was sleeping in a room the floor of which was plentifully strewn with roses and other flowers. The bed was a magnificent edifice of gilding and cloth of silver. The king reposed in the middle of the bed, supported by crimson satin pillows. His face was covered by a half-mask made of some shining material dipped in odoriferous oil, which the chief valet carefully readjusted after he had offered his majesty an early collation of sweetmeats and rolled meats spiced. The king's hands were covered with gloves richly embroidered; and his *manteau de nuit* was composed of white satin, adorned round the neck with silver spangles and tags.

Occasionally, the tedium of the royal sybarite was enlivened by the recital of some encounter between a cavalier of the court and one of his *mignons*, whose bragging and duelling propensities caused them to be regarded with terror

and disgust by all peaceful individuals. On the cushions beside the king lay a number of little dogs, which Henry alternately fondled, or incited to make deafening clamour. The number of lap dogs kept in his majesty's apartments often exceeded a hundred—seldom fewer. One of the favourite chamberlains observing that it cost the king emotion to select from this pack the dogs which were to accompany him in his daily airing with Queen Louise, invented the novel expedient of a light basket, richly lined with crimson satin, to be slung from the royal neck, wherein from twenty to thirty of Henry's diminutive pets might be comfortably stowed. The king adopted the contrivance, bestowing great praise on the ingenuity of his favourite. Parrots, and a small species of ape, also came in for a large share of Henry's attention. To the former he taught any libellous slang which then might be in vogue, while the apes were reserved as a means of special intimidation to unwished-for intruders in the royal apartments, or of vengeance on individuals obnoxious to the *mignons*. The king's hours of indolent pastime were often abruptly brought to a close by a sudden inspiration to perform some devout progress with which Henry pretended to have been smitten. The royal dressers were then summoned, and, after elaborate labour, Henry was equipped, and proceeded with most sanctified mien to spend the afternoon on his knees in one or other of the oratories he had founded in the churches of the capital.

Early in the summer of 1577, Catherine, with her daughter Marguerite, set out with the king for the seat of war in Poitou. The equipages of the two queens, and the appointments of their trains, were gorgeous in the extreme. The queen-mother, with five of her ladies, appeared in a chariot covered with gilding and painting; lackeys, dressed in splendid liveries, hanging on the large *portières*, and pages and a host of attendants running before and by the side. On great occasions, like the present, the *Grande Bande*, consisting of two hundred ladies, all of them of high quality, attended their royal mistress, some in carriages richly ornamented, others on horseback; their steeds gallantly caparisoned, and

all accompanied by pages and valets. The ladies of her household were all eminent for their beauty, their accomplishments, and the splendour of their apparel; while, as regarded their moral attributes, no further detail is necessary than that of the mere fact, that by the gallants of the court and camp they were distinguished as the *escadron de la Reine-mère*, the Squadron of Venus, or, in plainer English, the *Light Brigade*. Nothing, in short, could be more profligate than their whole deportment; and though Catherine preserved the dignity of her sex, she rarely attempted to interfere with the conduct of her attendants; and thus her immediate circle became a hotbed of vice and intrigue, rendered only the more pernicious by the specious gloss of wit, fascination, and splendour. The astute Italian princess introduced a sort of chivalry of vice in the prosecution of a campaign. She created an oasis consecrated to the coarser Venus. But outside these narrow limits the civil war raged with undiminished ardour.

An entertainment given by the king to the principal officers of the army under the Duke of Anjou, on the occasion of the capture of the town of La Charité from the Huguënots, will convey some idea of the depravation of manners of the court of the profligate Valois. A banquet was prepared in the park of Plessis-les-Tours, at which the guests were served by the most beautiful women of Catherine's *escadron de Vénus*, and whose only covering to the waist was that afforded by the waving tresses with which nature had more or less luxuriantly endowed them. The festival lasted from midday to midnight. The trees beneath which the revellers sat were garlanded with particoloured lamps, in addition to torches and cressets which brilliantly illuminated the *fête-champêtre* till sunrise. The expense of such russet silk vestments as the frolicsome nymphs really did wear on the occasion cost the king, L'Etoile tells us, a sum of no less than sixty thousand francs. But this lavish expenditure was outdone by Catherine, who, a few days afterwards, feasted the king and court, at her castle of Chenonceau, at a cost of one hundred thousand francs. The banquet was held upon the margin of a bubbling spring,

and was free from the gross improprieties which characterized her son's military fête at Plessis, at which even Catherine was, or affected to be, scandalized. For, either through caprice or some other motive than that of levity, the queen-mother ignominiously dismissed one of her maids of honour, Mademoiselle de la Motte Mèsme—ostensibly for having made a midnight assignation in the grand avenue of the castle with the Marquis d'Elbœuf—"such proceedings," her majesty observed, "being contrary to modesty." Other festivities followed at Poitiers, at which it is to be hoped that, warned by the fate of their unfortunate companion, the rest of the fair but facile squadron conducted themselves with greater propriety.

This feasting and revelry, however, was rudely disturbed by a tumult occasioned by a barbarous murder committed by Henry's reigning favourite, De Villequier, on the person of his wife, in the castle of Poitiers, and close to the royal apartments. The natural daughter of the Count de Montbazon, her union with De Villequier, though envied by many for the splendid position occupied by the king's favourite, had entailed upon her a life of daily misery. Her husband's jealousy had been excited through her intimacy with a young courtier named Barbizy. During the king's stay at Poitiers, an anonymous letter reached De Villequier accusing his wife of a criminal attachment, and of a plot to take away his life before her dishonour should become known. Whereupon De Villequier secretly searched his wife's casket, and found a packet of letters therein, addressed to her by Barbizy, and, moreover, a cake of white looking substance, which he inferred to be the poison intended for his destruction. The next morning, therefore, De Villequier abruptly entered his wife's bedchamber. The unfortunate lady had just risen, and was engaged at her toilette, in the act of combing her hair before a mirror held by one of her waiting-women. De Villequier rushed upon her, and stabbed her with his dagger, burying the blade to the hilt in her side. Not content with this, he thrust her through the body several times with his sword. He then attacked the waiting-maid,

and killed her with many blows of his dagger. These atrocious deeds accomplished, the assassin proceeded to the king's bedside, and coolly recounted his crimes, requesting letters of pardon under the royal seal, as he alleged the provocation extenuated his offence. The uproar in the castle was tremendous when the bodies of Madame de Villequier and her maid were found weltering in blood, life totally extinct; and the outcry against the assassin was so vehement, that Henry hesitated whether it were not more prudent to yield up his favourite to justice. Villequier, however, departed secretly for Paris, of which city he was lieutenant-governor, and by the time the court returned thither the horror occasioned by his crime had diminished, while fresh deeds of violence committed by the profligate favourites helped to cast a veil of oblivion over the past.

Henry's prime favourite, the Marquis du Guast, had incurred the bitter hatred of the Queen of Navarre, by spreading, during her stay in Poitou, the most defamatory reports relative to her intimacy with Bussy d'Amboise, a minion of her younger brother. Du Guast, whose favour with the king was at its height, "governed everybody," Marguerite tells us in her memoirs; "every one was obliged to beg and pray him to obtain that which he wished from the king. If any person presumed to ask for himself, he was denied with contempt. If any one served the princes, he was a ruined man, and exposed to a thousand quarrels and annoyances." Du Guast and the other royal minions having proved victorious in the battle of Dormans, returned to court more arrogant than ever. He made a parade of his enmity for the Duke of Anjou and his favourite, Bussy d'Amboise; and had spoken so openly of the gallantries of Marguerite with the latter, as to draw down upon that shameless woman the reprimands of her mother, brother, and husband. Bussy, however, pertinaciously continuing his attentions to the young queen, some cavaliers in the suite of Henry of Bearn plotted his assassination, Du Guast furnishing a band of picked men from his own regiment of guards for the purpose. It was concerted to waylay Bussy as he quitted the

queen's chamber in the Louvre one night, after being released from his attendance on her brother. At midnight the bravos were duly placed in ambuscade in certain dark corners of the locality, while twenty or thirty gentlemen with drawn swords awaited their victim. Bussy, who was as brave as he was arrogant and quarrelsome, had been engaged in a duel on the day previous with the *Sieur de St Phal*, and having received a wound in the sword arm, could not defend himself. As luck would have it, when he quitted the palace he was accompanied by fifteen gentlemen of the Duke of Anjou's household. The mark by which his assailants were told to single him out from among his companions was a dove coloured scarf richly embroidered—reported to be a gift of his royal lady-love,—but more fortunate for his master than himself, one of Bussy's retainers had likewise injured his arm, and which, in imitation of his chief, he had bound round with a scarf of similar colour. When Bussy reached the place of ambush, the Bearnnois cavaliers rushed upon him, and a bloody conflict ensued. Aided by his brave companions, Bussy managed to fight his way to his lodgings, which were at hand, the more readily as, his retainer with the scarf being killed at the beginning of the affray, the assailants, believing that their vengeance had been completed, gradually dispersed.

The Duke of Anjou was highly incensed at this attempt to deprive him of "the most brave and the most worthy of servants a prince could have," but the king forbade a renewal of the fray under penalty of arrest. At the urgent request of *Catherine*, Monsieur very reluctantly consented that Bussy should retire from court for a few weeks, as serious broils were apprehended when the latter should recover the use of his arm.

As for Du Guast, Marguerite and the Duke had no immediate means of avenging themselves on the powerful favourite, though before many weeks elapsed, he experienced the cost of outraging a woman of Marguerite's temperament. In justice to Du Guast it must be said that he was not altogether the high handed scamp the princess seeks to represent

him in her memoirs. Indeed, of the throng of worthless favourites who surrounded the throne of Henry III., he appears to have been one of the least reprehensible. Du Guast perpetually counselled his royal master to discard his slothful habits; he abhorred and protested against the profligacy exhibited at the court revels. Neither did he impoverish the king by shameful exactions. His faults were an excess of arrogance, and an implacable pursuit of those persons, including the Queen of Navarre, whom he hated.

Wearied of the captivity in which they were held, the Duke of Anjou, and subsequently the King of Navarre, made their escape from court. Henry III., in the first burst of his rage, placed guards over Marguerite—an indignity which she attributed to the advice of Du Guast. The queen was soon liberated, but she did not forget the insult.

Before the month expired during which the attempt on Bussy's life had been made, Marguerite took steps which showed her to be a true sister of the King of the St. Bartholomew. She went in quest of an assassin. In the monastery of the Augustines, a certain Baron de Viteaux had sought concealment, after murdering, among other persons, a retainer of Henry III. Had it not been for Du Guast, who opposed it, the king, who soon forgot such affairs, would have very readily granted him a pardon. So Viteaux, of course, mortally hated Du Guast.

Marguerite, therefore, did not hesitate to seek for this man of blood among the cloisters, or more probably in the vast and gloomy church. It was at a fitting season—the eve of the *Jour des Morts* (All Saints' Day). All the bells in Paris were about to toll lugubriously, and the Parisians, as was their wont, after hearing mass and visiting the tombs, would return to their homes at an early hour. The cold-blooded woman calculated that these circumstances would facilitate the deed she meditated. With palpitating limbs and trembling voice, she asked him to do for her the very thing he desired to do on his own account, and which, sooner or later, he would have done unprompted. Not caring now,

however, to act without a reward, De Viteaux feigned unwillingness to proceed in the matter. Marguerite promised a sum, but the bravo insisted on prompt payment. The young and remorseless princess, undeterred by the awe of that region of the dead amid which the unholy bargain was struck, paid down the price of blood, and secured a faithful agent.

Du Guast had hired a small house near the Louvre for purposes of retirement. About ten o'clock that same night, favoured by the noise of the clanging bells and the deserted streets, De Viteaux, followed by a few companions on whom he could rely, entered the courtyard, and mixed unnoticed with the crowd of retainers of such friends of the marquis as were attending the *coucher* of the doomed minion.

De Viteaux waited patiently, until one after another, the visitors of the marquis having taken their departure, he and his bravos found themselves alone. Then, having gagged and bound the porter, they ascended the staircase, and knocked at the door of Du Guast's sleeping apartment. A page unsuspectingly admitted them, and they found the marquis in bed, reading. The baron, without uttering a word, rushed upon his defenceless victim, and having passed his sword several times through his body, finished by flinging the corpse from the bed upon the floor. Though not unarmed, the attack was so sudden that the unfortunate favourite had not time to seize the sword which lay beside his pillow. Three servants, who at the same time had sought to defend their master, were slain by De Viteaux's followers. Two valets escaped by a window on to the roof of an adjacent house, while another climbed up the chimney, so that the egress of the assassins was unmolested, and nothing known of the murder for some hours after its committal, when Du Guast's lifeless body was found on the floor of his chamber. Meanwhile the band, having extinguished their torches, made their way to the ramparts, to a spot where cords had been prepared to aid their descent, and horses awaited them. De Viteaux fled to the camp of the Duke of Anjou, where he remained in safety. For though

the king in his first fury caused a strict investigation to be made, and as suspicion soon fixed upon the names of the chief instigators of the crime, however doubtful might be the identity of the agents—for De Vitcaux had worn a mask of white crape—the king thought it advisable not to pursue the assassins.

Henry gave Du Guast a magnificent funeral, but regretted his loss very little; for that favourite had begun to weary him by exhorting his royal master to show more vigour and activity in state affairs. The marquis was buried in St. Germain l'Auxerrois before the high altar, and the king afterwards caused a splendid tomb to be raised over the remains of his minion, to the great indignation of the Parisians.

Such a state of society naturally bore its bitter fruits: sanguinary brawls, murderous duels, and treacherous assassinations were of constant occurrence. A great portion of 1578 was occupied by both the Court and Parliament in controlling these feuds between the *mignons* of Henry and those of his brother. The head and front of every outbreak was the duke's chief ruffler, Bussy d'Amboise. He was brave, and one of the best swordsmen in France, but of an insolent and truculent demeanour. The character of this troublesome man is well hit off in a single sentence of a contemporary. At a word or gesture which he thought to be in the slightest degree offensive, he would offer the most provoking bravado to his foe, "drawing his sword," says the writer, "if the wind blew a blade of straw across his path." After the flight of Villequier from Poitiers, four gentlemen of Monsieur's suite, named Livarot, Grammont, Mauléon, and La Valette, quitted the household of the duke to enter that of the king, thinking to advance themselves through the fancied ruin of his chief favourite. When the court returned to Paris, a fierce feud was the result of this change, Bussy taking the lead amongst the duke's partisans, and Quélus heading the pretensions of his companions in the service of Henry. After a banquet given by the king on Twelfth-day, 1578, at which Mademoiselle de Pons was declared

"Queen of the Bean," Henry went with this lady to hear vespers in the chapel of the Hotel Bourbon, attired, as were his *mignons*, with the utmost magnificence. The Duke d'Anjou also attended the service, simply clad in a black doublet, and attended by Bussy and other gentlemen. These, however, were followed by a long train of officers and six of Bussy's pages, dressed sumptuously in cloth of gold, with ruffs and plumes like those worn by the royal minions. The insolent favourite of Monsieur was heard to exclaim aloud, as he took his place near the duke, "We live in days when it is the turn of every vagabond to wear fine clothes!" On the following night an attempt upon his life was made as he returned to his lodgings from the Louvre. Bussy suspecting Grammont of having planned this *guet à pens*, accused the latter of it on meeting him the next morning at the palace. The royal minions took the part of Grammont, and Quélus proposed that a pitched battle should take place between the chamberlains and retainers on the one side, and the duke's followers on the other. Three hundred combatants of either party accepted the challenge thus to vindicate their frivolous quarrels. The place of combat was agreed upon, but before the encounter came off it was interdicted by the king. The same evening, nevertheless, the house in which Bussy lodged was stormed by De Quélus and a band of gentlemen, when several persons were mortally wounded, and more serious consequences must have ensued but for the interposition of the Maréchal de Montmorency, who promptly called out the royal guard and suppressed the tumult.

The irregularities and buffooneries of the royal favourites were indeed the bane of French manners at this period, and inflicted a deep and lasting injury on the social condition of France. The court itself became alternately the scene of unbridled sensuality, and of fierce brawls, bloody duels, and licensed assassination.

Charles IX. was the first king of France who took serious measures to put an end to the duel. His brother, Henry III., followed his example, but without evincing much energy,

until the occurrence of the following unhappy affair, which nearly concerned himself.

Quélus, son of Antoine de Levy, was one of the most distinguished knights of the order of the Holy Ghost. His most intimate friend, a nobleman named Entraguet, was seen to descend one evening from the window of a lady beloved by Quélus himself. Reproaches and insults were exchanged, and Quélus went so far as to call Entraguet a fool, to which Entraguet humorously replied that Quélus was a liar. These assertions, according to the chroniclers of the period, were made in a spirit of pleasantry, though there can be no doubt of the harshness of the words made use of. However, no one thought the quarrel would end seriously, although a meeting was arranged, at which each principal was to be attended by two seconds.

Quélus took Livarot and Maugiron, two of the king's favourites. Entraguet's seconds were Ribarac and Schomberg. The rendezvous had been fixed in the *Parc des Tournelles*, now the *Place Royale*, but which at that time was used as a horse-market. The arms were to be the sword and the dagger. The combatants had left their homes during the night, in order that nothing might interfere with their projects. As soon as the parties met, Ribarac advanced towards Maugiron, and taking him on one side, said—

“It seems to me that we had much better induce these gentlemen to make it up than allow them to kill one another.”

To which Maugiron replied—

“I did not come here to string pearls. I myself wish to fight.”

“Fight!” returned Ribarac; “and with whom? You can have no interest in the quarrel.”

“With you,” said Maugiron.

“With me? Then let us say our prayers.”

And with these words, Ribarac drew his sword, crossed it with his dagger, and said a short prayer.

“Come, you have prayed enough,” cried Maugiron.

Ribarac rose, and rushed with such impetuosity upon his

enemy, that they at once ran one another through, and fell dead on the spot.

Quélus had come to the field armed only with a sword. Seeing that his adversary had also a dagger, he said to him—

“Entraguet, you have a dagger, and I have none.”

“So much the worse for you,” replied Entraguet; “it was very wrong of you to leave it behind.”

In spite of this inequality, the combat commenced. Quélus pierced his opponent in the arm, but almost at the same time he himself received three or four thrusts in the body, and fell to the ground.

Schomberg had addressed Livarot, and, seeing his friends engaged, said to him—

“Livarot, they are fighting. What are we to do?”

“*Ma foi!* we must also fight for our honour,” answered Livarot.

Each rushed to the attack. Schomberg, who was a German, laid open his adversary's left cheek with a blow, after the fashion of his own country; but, before falling, and in spite of the blood which issued in abundance from his wound, Livarot gave him a thrust in his chest which stretched him dead on the ground.

The issue of the combat was as follows:—Maugiron, Schomberg, and Ribarac, were killed on the spot; Livarot was carried, wounded, to the Hotel de Boissy, situated in the neighbourhood, Entraguet, also wounded, took refuge with M. de Guise, who afterwards helped him to escape. As for Quélus, thanks to the broths which the king himself carried to him, and to the hundred thousand crowns promised to the surgeons if they cured him of his wounds, he was seen three weeks after the duel in a dressing-gown in the court of his hotel looking at the horses which had been brought there in readiness for his journey; but that very day he had a relapse, and the day afterwards died.

The remarkable thing about this combat, in which Henry III. lost all his favourites, was that it was the first duel in which, in accordance with the Italian mode, the seconds made common cause with the principals and fought them-

selves. From that time it became the rule for seconds as well as principals to take part in duels, and not long afterwards Bussy d'Amboise's celebrated duel of twelve took place.

Bussy, who murdered so many persons in the St. Bartholomew massacre, and, among others, one of his own relations, with whom he had a law-suit, was a bully of the first order, equally celebrated for his insolence and his brutal courage. The following is an instance of his mode of entering into a quarrel. A nobleman named Saint-Phal made some remarks about some embroidery which displayed the letter X. Bussy said the letter was not X, but Y. Thereupon a dispute ensued, a challenge of six was given, and a combat of six against six was arranged. On this occasion fortune was not blind, inasmuch as Bussy was severely wounded.

The brave Crillon was a great friend of this man. Nevertheless, happening to meet him one day in the Rue St. Honoré, Bussy asked him the hour in a tone which displeased him.

"The hour of your death," replied Crillon.

"That remains to be seen," answered Bussy, and thereupon each drew his sword, but before long they were separated.

Brantome tells the following anecdote about this extraordinary person:—"One evening," he says, "being at the Louvre, where there was a ball, he pushed before M. de Grammont, who, with a lady on his arm, was proceeding to join the dancers. When the ball was over, and the king had gone to bed, a young nobleman named Maulion went up to M. de Bussy, who was going away, and informed him that M. de Grammont, his cousin, wished to speak to him, and that he was waiting for him at the ford. 'Young man,' answered d'Amboise, disdainfully, 'Bussy never fights at night, and has never exhibited his courage to the stars or to the moon, which are not worthy to contemplate it, but only to the sun, that alone can show it as it really is; but tomorrow morning, as soon as the sun is up, I shall not fail to present myself at the place you mention, or elsewhere, if M. de Grammont changes his mind. Do me the pleasure

to come with him, and mind you bring two grave diggers with you, for before leaving the ground I mean to have you both buried for the honour we owe to the dead' "

Over the dead bodies of his favourites Henry made a most preposterous and degrading exhibition of effeminate sorrow and fondness, and erected for them a sumptuous mausoleum in the church of St Paul, at Paris. He is moreover said to have composed the following lines, and ordered them to be attached to the pall at the foot of the coffins —

' Seigneur ' recois en ton giron
Schomberg, Quéfus, et Maugiron ! '

But surely the couplet reads more like a sarcasm on the king's profane folly, than the expression of his serious ejaculation

Another of the profligates whose names we have mentioned, the young Count de St Megrin, speedily followed his companions to the tomb, through simulating a *liaison* with the Duchess de Guise. One evening in the court circle, the king happening to make some coarse jokes upon the boasted good fortune of this vaunting minion with Madame de Guise, the Duke de Mayenne, her brother-in-law, became so exasperated, that he resolved to avenge the insult by taking the life of the braggart as he left the Louvre on the following evening. The king had received a sudden intimation of the design to waylay his favourite by the princes of Lorraine as he was on the point of dismissing the chamberlain from duty, and pressed the count to remain in the palace all night. St Megrin, however, despised the warning, boastfully saying, as he quitted the presence, " Let them come on, these Lorraine princes—let them dare to attack me, and they shall find a man true and valiant " No sooner, however, had he plunged into the obscurity of one of the streets which led from the Place du Louvre to his dwelling, than he was set upon by bravos. The page who walked before him with a torch was their first victim, and the count, after defending himself with undaunted courage, at length fell encircled from numerous wounds, and was left for dead

on the pavement. The clash of swords, meanwhile, having attracted the notice of the night-watch, the officer who headed it recognised the unfortunate favourite, whom he caused to be transported in a speechless and dying state to his hotel, while notice was sent to the king of the catastrophe. Henry, though greatly affected at the loss of another minion, seems not to have dared to avenge him, as all further investigation concerning the author of this daring crime was immediately suppressed. The king ordered the body to be conveyed to the Hotel de Boissy, where, after lying in state for eight days, he had it interred in the same vault with Quélus and Maugiron.

Though it was the conviction of the Duke de Guise that his consort had erred on the score of levity only, he resolved to read her such a lesson as would probably prevent her for the future risking her fair fame by the indulgence of reprehensible flirtation. On the same night, therefore, that St. Mégrin was assassinated, the duke entered his wife's chamber, holding a bowl in one hand and a dagger in the other. This untimely visit—for it was long after midnight—startled the duchess from a profound slumber. Without permitting her to speak or cry out, and holding before her the bowl and dagger in a menacing way, he repeated the scandalous tales afloat relating to her intimacy with St. Mégrin. After he had bitterly reproached her for the disgrace her levity had brought upon a princely house, he revealed to her the doom it had called down upon her young and boastful lover. "Nevertheless, madam," continued he, "it is fitting, also, that your guilt or imprudence should likewise be expiated. Resolve, therefore; you too must die, by poison or by this dagger—choose!" The duchess, with a shriek of terror, begged for mercy, throwing herself at the duke's feet, and solemnly protesting that she had never broken her marriage vow. She entreated him to take pity on their children, and declared her willingness to quit Paris and retire to Nanteuil, or to their Castle of Joinville. The tears of the duchess, however, failed to move the determination of her husband, and his threats at length compelled her to take the bowl

which he presented, and drain its fatal contents to the dregs. The duchess then fell on her knees, and, commending her soul to Heaven, prayed that at least a priest might be brought to receive her confession, and administer the last sacraments of the Church. Guise made no answer, but quitted the chamber, locking the door after him. For more than half an hour the duchess remained alone, a prey to suspense and apprehension, and so prostrated with terror that she had not strength to move from the spot where the duke left her on her knees. At the expiration of this interval, Guise returned to the apartment, raised his wife from the floor, and told her that the liquid which he had compelled her to swallow was not poison, but simply the soup which he was accustomed to take on retiring to rest, and that her fears had alone prevented her from discerning this fact. The duke then avowed his disbelief of the reports respecting her intimacy with St. M^cgrin, but added that her own levity of manner had given semblance to the truth of them. He bade her heed well the lesson of that night, and remember that if she deviated ever so little from that line of conduct which became the consort of Guise, his retribution would be signal. Finally, the duke commanded his wife to present herself on the following morning at the *lever* of Queen Louise, and evince no emotion unbecoming her honour and his own when the fate of the Count St. M^cgrin should be discussed. Madame de Guise obeyed her husband to the letter, and thenceforth none of the frivolous throng presumed to incur the vengeance of Guise.

The bitterest invectives were written in condemnation of the culpable weakness of Henry III. for these scions of great houses who devoted themselves to his service, who kept watch and ward over him, and protected him with their swords. Undaunted by danger in any shape, those royal minions dealt or received the death stroke, fighting hand to hand with their diggers in the cause of their lord and master, like the Dukes d'Ep^eron and Joyeuse, to whom the infatuated king abandoned the whole administration, for the maintenance of their privileges, like Qu^eluz, Schomberg, and Maugiron, for their ladies, like St. M^cgrin, so insantly in

love with the Duchess of Guise. On learning the death of St. Mégrin, Henry of Navarre—who unhappily, in his marriage with the licentious Marguerite de Valois, had no less cause of grief against the minions than Henry of Guise—exclaimed excitedly, “*That’s the fashion in which to accoutre those little figged-up gallants, whose sole amusement is to dangle after the princesses of the court.*”

It is highly satisfactory to read that most of these men of blood and lawless violence perished by untimely deaths. The king, during the absence of his brother in England in 1578—whither he secretly went to present himself to Queen Elizabeth as a suitor for her hand, the parties being respectively of the ages of forty-five and twenty-five—determined to avenge on Bussy the misdemeanours which had so long provoked his hatred. At this time Bussy was carrying on an intrigue with the wife of the Count de Montsoreau, grand huntsman to the Duke of Anjou. Bussy had written a letter to his master, detailing the course of this intrigue in jocular terms, and in which he used the expression, “that he had at length completely lured the grand huntsman’s hind into his net.” This letter the duke handed the king, who retained it. Soon after the duke had set sail, Henry sent for Montsoreau, and placed Bussy’s epistle in his hands. The count thereupon returned home, and, holding a poniard to his wife’s throat, forced her to write to Bussy, appointing an interview with him at the solitary castle of La Coutancière, not far from Saumur. Bussy fell into the trap. On being admitted to the chamber of the countess, he was there encountered by her husband and a band of men-at arms. A fierce fight ensued, in which the high courage and formidable skill of Bussy long prevailed against his numerous assailants. Finding himself at length growing weak from loss of blood, he suddenly sprang from the window, and in all probability would have made good his escape, had not his doublet caught upon an iron hook which projected from the wall beneath. Before he could extricate himself, Montsoreau rushed upon him, and, thrusting his sword through the body of Bussy as he hung suspended over the courtyard, effectually avenged

his honour by that minion's death. This sanguinary deed produced no more sensation at court than was evinced by the penning of a few epigrams; nor could Bussy's relatives, powerful as they were, procure the prosecution of his murderer. Brantome, indeed, asserts that the king himself directly urged Montsoreau to avenge his honour, and not only promised him immunity after the contemplated crime, but a liberal recompence if he succeeded in slaying De Bussy.*

The French nobility, as might be expected, did not silently nor without remonstrance witness the aggrandizement of the king's chief favourites. When Henry married Joyeuse to Marguerite de Lorraine, the queen's sister, the suits they wore were exactly alike, each costing 10,000 crowns. The nuptial festivities were kept up for seventeen successive days, at a cost to the king of 1,200,000 crowns. Nor was this all the favour shown to the refined and intellectual Joyeuse. A few days after his betrothal he was made Governor of Normandy, and High Chamberlain of the Court. These things done, Henry set about providing a still greater favourite, La Valette, with a wife and fortune. This young nobleman was created Duke d'Epernon, with precedence above all other peers, excepting those of royal or of sovereign descent, and the Duke de Joyeuse; and to this was added, as an appanage, the county of Epernon, which Henry purchased expressly from the King of Navarre. Protest after protest was now made by the nobles against the precedence so unjustly granted to the favourites Joyeuse and Epernon; and Montmorency and other men of high rank refused to meet the minions in any assembly, public or private. Lampoons and satires were rife, and "*Le Nogaret*,"† as Epernon was insultingly called, was compared to Gaveston, the favourite of Edward II. of England, and the parallel ended by predicting for him the same wretched fate. The justice of such strictures will be admitted when we find the king conferring on this rapacious man the sum of 400,000 francs to purchase

* A powerful tragedy was written upon the career and fate of this hectoring favourite by the English dramatist, George Chapman, in 1613.

† M. d'Epernon was son of the Marquis de Nogaret.

suitable dress, equipments, and furniture for his new rank. When the Chancellor Cheverney remonstrated against this lavish expenditure, Henry, after commenting on the valour of Joyeuse, who, his majesty said, had lost seven teeth at the siege of La Fère, replied, "Ah, I shall become wise and thrifty now I have married my sons!"

France had now become a scene of general anarchy and sanguinary violence, by the "War of the three Henries," as it was styled. Strange that these three Henries, who had been companions in childhood, who were at the head of the three rival houses of Valois, Bourbon, and Guise, and were chiefs of that civil war called after their names, should all three be fated to die by the hand of the assassin! Henry III., prompted by the evil counsel of his prime favourite, D'Epernon, secretly formed the design of assassinating the Duke of Guise. On the morning succeeding the mournful night of that prince's murder in the Castle of Blois, the king entered his mother's chamber at an early hour. "Madam," he cried, "congratulate me; I am once more King of France, for this morning I have put to death the King of Paris!" The queen-mother in great agony—for she was then on her death-bed—raised herself in a sitting posture:—"Do you indeed know what you have done, my son? God grant you may find that you have done well!" Dating from that hour, Henry was no longer King of France. The deed of blood was, in the significant words of Fouché, "worse than a crime, it was a blunder." The Nemesis quickly followed by the knife of the monk Clement.

The death-bed of Henry presented a singular scene. On the one side sat his successor, Henry of Navarre; on the other stood a group of his dejected favourites, with despair upon their faces—but less concerned, probably, for the king's sufferings than for the impending loss of that court favour and influence which they anticipated under the sway of a soldier-king who only rewarded the deserving.

Such was the tragic and miserable termination of the royal dynasty of Valois, which had given thirteen sovereigns to France, and had filled the throne during a period of two hundred and sixty-one years.

his honour by that minion's death. This sanguinary deed produced no more sensation at court than was evinced by the penning of a few epigrams, nor could Bussy's relatives, powerful as they were, procure the prosecution of his murderer. Brantome, indeed, asserts that the king himself directly urged Montsoreau to avenge his honour, and not only promised him immunity after the contemplated crime, but a liberal recompence if he succeeded in slaying De Bussy.*

The French nobility, as might be expected, did not silently nor without remonstrance witness the aggrandizement of the king's chief favourites. When Henry married Joyeuse to Marguerite de Lorraine, the queen's sister, the suits they wore were exactly alike, each costing 10,000 crowns. The nuptial festivities were kept up for seventeen successive days, at a cost to the king of 1,200,000 crowns. Nor was this all the favour shown to the refined and intellectual Joyeuse. A few days after his betrothal he was made Governor of Normandy, and High Chamberlain of the Court. These things done, Henry set about providing a still greater favourite, La Valette, with a wife and fortune. This young nobleman was created Duke d'Epernon, with precedence above all other peers, excepting those of royal or of sovereign descent, and the Duke de Joyeuse, and to this was added, as an appanage, the county of Epernon, which Henry purchased expressly from the King of Navarre. Protest after protest was now made by the nobles against the precedence so unjustly granted to the favourites Joyeuse and Epernon, and Montmorency and other men of high rank refused to meet the minions in any assembly, public or private. Lampoons and satires were rife, and "*Le Nogaret*,"† as Epernon was insultingly called, was compared to Gaveston, the favourite of Edward II. of England, and the parallel ended by predicting for him the same wretched fate. The justice of such strictures will be admitted when we find the king conferring on this rapacious man the sum of 100,000 francs to purchase

* A powerful tragedy was written upon the career and fate of this lecturing favourite by the English dramatist George Chapman in 1613.

† M. d'Epernon was son of the Marquis d'Nogaret.



Sardonyx ring with cameo head of Queen Elizabeth, in the possession of the Rev. Lord John Thynne *

CHAPTER VI.

THE FAVOURITES OF ELIZABETH TUDOR.

LEICESTER—RALEIGH—HATTON—ESSEX—BLOUNT.

THE character and career of Elizabeth Tudor's most distinguished Favourites are sufficiently well known in history to be dwelt upon in detail, yet Leicester and Hatton, Raleigh and Essex form so brilliant a group at the court, and figure so conspicuously throughout the reign of England's greatest queen, that certain salient points in the courtier life of each irresistibly present themselves in illustration of our subject.

Few sovereigns have known better how to prize both mental and external attributes than the vain, self-loving, but discerning Elizabeth. The instance of Leicester, however, forms a striking exception to her ordinary discrimination. "History," justly remarks Lodge, "to its lamentable discredit, invariably asserts, in the same breath, his wickedness and the wisdom of his royal patroness,—one of these verdicts must be false."

The daughters of the royal families of England had at all times intermarried with subjects. It need not surprise us, therefore, to find nobles aspiring to the hand of Elizabeth. The Earl of Arundel, though several years her senior, long cherished hopes, Sir William Pickering, a man possessed of

* This is said to be the identical ring given by Queen Elizabeth to Essex, and so fatally retained by Lady Nottingham. It has descended from Lady Frances Devereux, Essex's daughter, in unbroken succession from mother to daughter to the present possessor. The ring is gold, the sardonyx engraved, and the inside of blue enamel.—Labarte, *Arts of the Middle Ages*.

beauty of person, cultivation of mind, and great taste in the arts, was for some time thought to stand high in the favour of the maiden queen. But all were eclipsed by the claims of Robert Dudley. At Elizabeth's entrance into London as queen, he appeared in her train as Master of the Horse, and wealth and honours were speedily showered upon him.

Though Elizabeth had replied to the respectful but urgent address of her first parliament—praying her to make choice of a husband—that she regarded herself as solemnly espoused to her kingdom at her coronation, and that she viewed her subjects as her children, and desired no fairer remembrance of her to go down to posterity than the inscription on her tomb—"Here lies Elizabeth, who lived and died a maiden queen,"—yet some contrary expression to Dudley may have led him to entertain hopes of her hand. Few, we should think, but such writers as Sanders and Lingard will ascribe wantonness to Elizabeth. In fact, with all her dignity and greatness of mind, she was by nature a coquette; she loved admiration, and she had inherited her father's partiality for handsome attendants; like him, too, she was apt to indulge in a coarse, and what might seem to us an indelicate, familiarity in language and action, which malicious minds could easily misinterpret. It is mere calumny to accuse the queen of any improper familiarity with Dudley. They had been intimate from childhood; they were born on the same day and hour; and Dudley had rendered her many services whilst she was princess, and a prisoner in her sister's hands. These circumstances will perhaps adequately account for her early and continued partiality for Dudley, and his rapid and splendid advance to fortune.

Though Elizabeth might have been sincere in her resolve not to marry, of this Dudley might have been altogether sceptical. That he, however, aspired to her hand, and with a boldness unknown to all other competitors, is certain; and that, to insure at least the possibility of obtaining it, he compassed the murder of his first wife, Amy Robsart, is scarcely doubtful. It is possible that slander, as Sir Walter Scott remarks, may have blackened the character of Leicester with darker shades than really belonged to it. But the almost general voice of

human and divine, not only maintained his ground through a long course of prosperity, but outwardly rose in the estimation of Elizabeth to the last hour of his life.

It is doubtful, however, whether Leicester really possessed the respect of Elizabeth in so great a degree as her conduct towards him seemed to imply. Her infatuation was devoid of that delicate and confiding attachment which alone can give stability to such ties. This was apparent after his death, when, with an avidity natural to her coarse mind, she seized upon a portion of his goods, which were offered to public sale, in order to repay herself for some debt due from the deceased nobleman. While to the world she appeared wholly devoted to Leicester, it is probable that the earl, who knew the female character well, may have been conscious of the insecurity of his station in her regard, and of the hollowness of that affection which followed him not to the tomb. This secret rendered him peculiarly sensitive to the dread of rivalry.

When Raleigh first appeared at court, the gleams of royal favour were sometimes supposed to fall abundantly upon the Earl of Sussex; and the introduction of the young aspirant to the especial notice of the queen has been attributed equally to Sussex as to his avowed enemy, Leicester. The features of Sir Walter Raleigh were moulded with the utmost symmetry, and the outline of manly beauty pervaded the whole countenance. He had a noble and capacious forehead, an eye beaming with intelligence, softened with the shadows of profound thought. The person of Raleigh was admirably proportioned and dignified, his height being nearly six feet. With the attractions of a noble figure, he studied to combine those of a graceful and splendid attire. The acute and wary Elizabeth prized these adventitious attributes as highly as the weakest and vainest of her attendants. During the years he was engaged in maritime discovery and speculation, favours and distinctions, whether he courted them or not, were lavishly showered upon him. But on the discovery of his amour with Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of the queen's maids of honour—an offence which, though he made the best atonement in his power by marrying the lady,

Elizabeth punished by imprisoning both in the Tower for many months—the sin was visited by the queen, it is to be feared, more as a scandal to her court, and an offence to her own paramount charms, than as a dereliction from morality.

The handsome Vice Chamberlain Hatton was as jealous of the brave and enterprising Raleigh, as Essex was afterwards of the young and blushing but manly Blount. The elevation of Hatton, coupled as it was with what Lodge euphemistically calls “the fantastic singularity of the incongruous and unconnected steps by which he ascended”—meaning, we suppose, his graceful steps in the *bransle* and *gaillarde*—invest his career with an air of romance, while our utter ignorance of the motives which induced Elizabeth thus greatly and strangely to distinguish him, involve it in suitable mystery. The only clue afforded us is the silly and incredible tale that he danced himself into his preferments—into the first place in the cabinet, and to the supreme seat in the administration of justice. Did this remarkable silence on a point of history arise from fear, or prudence or delicacy? Hatton was one of the handsomest and most accomplished men of his time, and the conduct of Elizabeth had already betrayed, in more than one instance, the extravagance into which personal predilections, of a nature not easy to be defined, were capable of leading her. Had his character been marked by the ambition of Leicester, or the rashness of Essex, the ground of his good fortune would, perhaps, have been no less evident than theirs. Honest Camden tells us, with much plainness, that “being young, and of a comely tallness of body and amiable countenance, he got into much favour with the queen.”

Like so many men who have risen to the highest stations in England Sir Christopher Hatton owed little beside the rank of gentleman to his birth. He was descended from a junior line of the very ancient house of Hatton of Hatton, in Cheshire which migrated into Northamptonshire, and was the third son of William Hatton of Holdenby, by Alice daughter of Lawrence Sanders, of Horingworth, both in that county. The pedigree of Hatton is placed beyond records,

and consequently to an apocryphal source. He was born in 1539, or thereabouts, and, after having been carefully instructed under the paternal roof, was entered a gentleman commoner of St. Mary's Hall, in Oxford, which after a brief residence he quitted, without having taken a degree, to become a member of the Society of the Inner Temple. He does not appear to have entered that Inn with a view of qualifying himself for the profession of the law, but to give him "the advantages of a familiar intercourse with men who joined to deep learning an extensive knowledge of the world and of the arts of social prudence." There is no record of his practice in any of the courts, or that he was ever called to the bar, but there exists ample proof that he mixed in the sports of his fellow students, for it was at one of those partly grotesque, partly romantic entertainments which at that time the Inns of Court frequently presented to royalty, that he first attracted the notice of the queen. "Sir Christopher Hatton," Naunton quaintly tells us, "came into the court as Sir John Perrott's opposite; as Perrott was used to say, 'by the galliard,' for he came thither as a private gentleman of the Inns of Court in a masque; and, for his activity and person, which was tall and proportionable, taken into her favour."

Hatton's first step on the ladder of court promotion was his appointment to the queen's band of gentlemen pensioners, at that time embodying fifty young men of the best families in the kingdom, and he was soon placed among the gentlemen of her privy chamber.

In May, 1572, Hatton was elected a knight of the shire for Northampton, and he continued to represent that county until he became Lord Chancellor. On the 13th of July, Lord Burghley was made Lord High Treasurer; Lord William Howard, Lord Privy Seal; the Earl of Sussex, Lord Chamberlain; and Sir Thomas Smith, Secretary of State. On the same occasion the office of Captain of the Guard becoming vacant by Sir Francis Knollys being made Treasurer of the Household, he was succeeded by Hatton, who still retained

the situation of gentleman of the privy chamber and of gentleman pensioner

Though large beneficial grants had been made to Hatton, no important office, nor any honour—for he was not even knighted until five years after this period—had been conferred upon him, yet the queen's regard for him was so notorious, that he was considered to rival the Earl of Leicester in her favour, and scandal was equally rife with respect to them both. The earliest allusion that has been found to these injurious reports shows how prevalent they must have been. In August, 1570, several persons were tried, and some executed at Norwich, for treasonable speeches and designs. "They had set out four proclamations, one was touching the wantonness of the court," and one of the conspirators called Mersham, having said that "My Lord of Leicester had two children by the queen," was sentenced to lose both his ears, or pay a fine of one hundred pounds. Among the traitorous speeches of a person called Mather, in 1571, according to Berney's written confession to Lord, was, that the queen "desireth nothing but to feed her own lewd fantasy, and to cut off such of her nobility as were not perfumed and courtlike to please her delicate eye, and place such as were for her turn, meaning dancers, and meaning you my Lord of Leicester, and one Mr Hatton, whom he said had more recourse unto her majesty in her privy chamber than reason would suffer, if she were so virtuous and well inclined as some noiseth her, with other such vile words as I am ashamed to speak, much more to write." In a letter from Archbishop Parker to Lord Burghley in September, 1572, he says he was credibly informed that some man had, in his examination by the Mayor of Dover and Mr Sommers, uttered "most shameful words against her (the queen), namely, that the Earl of Leicester and Mr Hatton should be such towards her as the matter is so horrible that they would not write down the words, but would have uttered them in speech to your lordship if ye could have been at leisure."

But there were far more distinguished and more virulent calumniators of the queen than these obscure people

The letter of Mary Stuart, containing accusations against her royal cousin of undue intimacy with Leicester and Hatton, has excited such wide-spread controversy, that we shall pass it over among others which occupy similar debatable ground.

In 1586, Elizabeth granted to Hatton and his heirs the island of Purbeck, in Dorsetshire, and in the same year named him as one of her commissioners for the trial, or rather for the conviction of the Queen of Scots. The beautiful but unfortunate Stuart was strongly worked upon by the insinuations of the Vice-Chamberlain Hatton. This favourite of her royal rival and cousin, and presumed confidant of his mistress's intentions, conjured Queen Mary to reply, lest her silence should be held as a confession of her guilt, and judgment be proceeded with in her absence.

"You are accused," said he, "but not condemned, to have conspired the destruction of our lady and queen anointed. You are, it is true, a queen, but the royal dignity does not except its possessor from replying to the imputation of a crime, such as neither the civil nor the canon law, nor the law of nations, nor the law of nature, could save from prosecution. If you are innocent, you wrong your reputation in avoiding trial. You protest yourself to be innocent, but Queen Elizabeth thinketh otherwise, and that not without ground, and is heartily sorry for the same. If you are innocent, the queen's commissioners, who are just and prudent men, are ready to hear you according to equity, with favour, and will rejoice with all their hearts at your making your innocence apparent. Believe me, the queen herself will be transported with joy, who affirmed to me, at my coming from her, that never anything befel her that troubled her more than that you should be charged with such misdemeanours. Therefore, lay aside the bootless claim of privilege of royal dignity, which cannot now avail you; appear in court; maintain your innocence, do not lay yourself open to suspicion by avoiding the trial, and stain your reputation with an eternal blot and aspersion."*

* Camden. Howell's "State Trials," vol. i p. 1171.

Burghley added, that they would proceed against her next day, even in her absence. Pondering, therefore, Hatton's advice, after a night passed in all the torture of uncertainty, Mary assented to appear before her judges. Hatton sat among the other gentlemen of the Privy Council, but, ostensibly, took no other part in it.

In the following year, 1587, to the astonishment of every one, Hatton being no lawyer, nor ever even called to the bar, was appointed Lord High Chancellor, unluckily succeeding in that great office Bromley, a lawyer of the highest fame, and as though to crown properly the heterogeneous favours which had been already bestowed on him, was, on the 23rd of May in the succeeding year, installed a Knight of the Garter. Camden informs us rather improbably, that Hatton was advanced to the office of the Great Seal by the "court arts of some, that by his absence from the court, and the troublesome discharge of so great a place, which they thought him not able to undergo, his favour with the queen might flag and grow less."

In the High Court of Chancery he was naturally enough received with cold and silent disdain, and we are told that the barristers for a time declined to plead before him. But the gentleness of his temper, and general urbanity of his manners, soon overcame those difficulties, while the earnestness and honesty with which he evidently applied the whole force of a powerful mind to qualify himself for his high office, gradually attracted to him the esteem of the public. "He executed," says Camden, "the place with the greatest state and splendour of any that we ever saw, and what he wanted in knowledge of the law he laboured to make good by equity and justice."

The notoriety of Elizabeth's incontinence was alleged by the Duke of Anjou as his reason for refusing to marry her, and one of Lord Burghley's objections to her marrying Leicester was, that "it would be thought that the slanderous speeches of the earl with the queen have been true."

Extraordinary evidence on this delicate subject is afforded by the following letter to Hatton, from his friend Edward

Dyer, written from Dover, and by the still more remarkable letters from Hatton to the queen. The letter from Dyer proves, says Sir Harris Nicholas, that whatever may have been the nature of Elizabeth's regard for Hatton, it was perfectly well known to his friends; and that, a rival having appeared, Hatton was thrown into the shade. He therefore consulted Dyer as to the means of maintaining or recovering his position in the queen's favour. Finding that Hatton contemplated the dangerous plan of reproaching Elizabeth for the change in her sentiments, Dyer earnestly advised him not to adopt so perilous a course; and, if the expressions used by Dyer are to receive their usual interpretation, it is difficult to disbelieve the reports which were then so prevalent. Hatton's rival was apparently the young and eccentric Earl of Oxford, who had lately married the daughter of Lord Burleigh, and whom he cruelly treated in revenge for her father having refused his request to intercede with the queen for the Duke of Norfolk. As Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, besides his illustrious descent, was distinguished for the same personal qualities as those which obtained the queen's favour for Hatton, his jealousy is not surprising:—

“MR. DYER TO MR. HATTON.

“SIR,—After my departure from you, thinking upon your case, as my dear friend, I thought good to lay before you mine opinion in writing somewhat more at large than at my last conference I did speak. And I do it of goodwill, for you need no counsel of mine I know right well. But one that standeth by shall see more in the game than one that is much less skilful, whose mind is too earnestly occupied. I will not recite the argument, or put the case as it were, for it needeth not; but go to the reasons, such as they be. First of all, you must consider with whom you have to deal, and what we be towards her; who though she do descend very much in her sex as a woman, yet we may not forget her place, and the nature of it as our sovereign. Now if a man, of secret cause known to himself, might on common reason challenge it, yet if the queen mislike thereof, the

world followeth the sway of her inclination, and never fall they in consideration of reason, as between private persons they do. And if it be after that rate for the most part in causes that may be justified, then much more will it be so in causes not to be avouched. A thing to be had on regard, for it is not good for any man struttly to weigh a general disallowance of her doings.

"That the queen will mislike of such a course, this is my reason. She will imagine that you go about to imprison her fancy, and to warp her grace within your disposition, and that will breed despite and hatred in her towards you, and so you may be cast forth to the malice of every envious person, flatterer, and enemy of yours, out of which you shall never recover yourself clearly, neither your friends, so long as they show themselves your friends.

"But if you will make a proof (*parier vramo*,* as Spanish phrase is) to see how the queen and he will yield to it, and it prosper, go through withal, if not, to change your course suddenly into another more agreeable to her majesty, I can like indifferently of that. But then you must observe this, that it be upon a by occasion, for else it were not convenient for divers reasons that you cannot but think upon.

"But the best and soundest way in my opinion is, to put on another mind, to use your suits towards her majesty in words, behaviour, and deeds, to acknowledge your duty, declaring the reverence which in heart you bear, and never seem deeply to condemn her frailties, but rather joyfully to commend such things as should be in her, as though they were in her indeed, hating my Lord of Cmt^y in the queen's understanding for affection's sake, and blaming him openly for seeking the queen's favour. I or though in the beginning when her majesty sought you (after her good manner) she did bear with ru^{ed} dealing of yours, until she had what she fancied, yet now, after satiety and fulness, it will rather hurt than help you, whereas, behaving yourself as I

* See Query For verrano? A Portuguese proverb—"To see daylight through obscurity."

† Query Oxford?

said before, your place shall keep you in worship, your presence in favour, your followers will stand to you, at least you shall have no bold enemies, and you shall dwell in the ways to take all advantages wisely, and honestly to serve your turn at times. Marry, thus much would I advise you to remember, that you use no words of disgrace or reproach towards him or any; that he, being the less provoked, may sleep, thinking all safe, while you do awake and attend your advantages.

“Otherwise you shall, as it were, warden him and keep him in order; and he will make the queen think that he beareth all for her sake, which will be as a merit in her sight; and the pursuing of his revenge shall be just in all men’s opinions, by what means soever he and his friends shall ever be able.

“You may perchance be advised and encouraged to the other way by some kind of friends that will be glad to see whether the queen will make an apple or a crab of you, which, as they find, will deal accordingly with you; following if fortune be good; if not, leave, and go to your enemy: for such kind of friends have no commodity by hanging in suspense, but set you a fire to do off or on—all is one to them; rather liking to have you in any extremity than in any good mean.

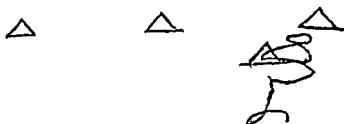
“But beware, not too late, of such friends, and of such as make themselves glewe between them and you, whether it be of ignorance or practice. Well, not to trouble you any longer, it is very necessary for you to impart the effect of this with your best and most accounted friends, and most worthy to be so; for then you shall have their assistance every way; who being made privy of your council, will and ought in honour to be partners of your fortune, which God grant to be of the best. The 9th of October, 1572. Your assured poor friend to command,

EDW. DYER.”*

Though there is no date to the following letter from

* Edward Dyer was one of the many dependants of the Earl of Leicester. He was occasionally employed in the queen’s service, and was rewarded in 1596 by the appointment of Chancellor of the Order of the Garter, when he was knighted; and died about 1607.

Hatton to the queen, and although he fell under her displeasure on subsequent occasions, there can be little doubt that it was written at this period; and it shows the ostensible cause of his loss of favour. It is superscribed with this cipher instead of the proper address.—



"MADAM,—In striving to withstand your violent course of evil opinion towards me, I might perhaps the more offend you because the truth of my cause disagreeeth with the rigour of your judgment. But the bitterness of my heart in humble complaints I trust you will hear, for your goodness and justice sake. May it therefore please you, my faults are said to be these: unthankfulness, covetousness, and ambition.

"To the first I speak the truth before God, that I have most entirely loved your person and service; to the which, without exception, I have everlastingly vowed my whole life, liberty, and fortune. Even so am I yours, as, whatever God and you should have made me, the same had been your own; than which I could, nor any can, make larger recompense. Thus I supposed to have been the true remuneration of greatest good turns, because I know it balanceeth in weight the greatest good wills. Neither hath the ceremony of thanksgiving any way wanted, as the world will right fully witness with me, and therefore in righteousness I most humbly pray you condemn me not. Spare your poor prostrate servant from this pronounced vengeance.

"To the second, I ever found your largeness before my lack, in such plenty as I could wish no more, so that by craving I never argued myself covetous, if any other way it appeared, let it be of folly and not of evil mind that so I have erred, yet God knoweth I never sought nor wished more wealth than to live worthily in your most sacred ser-

vice, without mixture of any other opinion, purpose or matter. I trust, therefore, in your holy heart this truth shall have his settled place. God for his mercy grant it may so be.

“To the third, God knoweth I never sought place but to serve you; though indeed, to shield my poor self, both nature and reason would have taught me to ask refuge at your strong and mighty hand. These late great causes that most displeased your nobles, as of the Duke of N. and Q. of S.,* the Acts of Parliament for religion, and other strange courses in these things taken, were all laid on my weak shoulders; under which when I shall fall, behold then the wretched man how he shall pass all pointed at. But to my purpose, if ever I inordinately sought either honour, or riches, place, calling, or dignity, I pray to God that hell might swallow me. Believe not, I humbly beseech you for your wisdom and worthiness, the tale so evil told of your most faithful: be not led by lewdness of others to lose your own, that truly loveth you. These most unkind conceits most wonderfully wring me: reserve me more graciously to be bestowed on some honourable enterprise for you; and so shall I die a most joyful man and eternally bound to you.

“But would God I might win you to think well according with my true meaning; then should I acquiet my mind, and serve you with joy and further hope of goodness. I ask right of Her will do no wrong; and yet this hard hap doth follow me, that I must make prayer for the blessing that every man hath without demand or asking. I fear your too great trouble in reading this blotted letter. I will therefore with my most dutiful submission pray for your long and happy life. I pray God bless you for ever.

“Your despairing most wretched bondman,

“CH. HATTON.”

Early in May, 1573, Hatton was seriously ill, and however much the queen's regard for him may have been lessened, his indisposition certainly revived her affection.

* Duke of Norfolk and Queen of Scots.

On the 11th of that month Mr Gilbert Talbot wrote a letter to his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury, filled with news, and it affords so much curious information on the state of the court that a few sentences will be extracted, besides the one immediately relating to Hatton — "My Lord Treasurer, even after the old manner, dealeth with matters of the State only, and beareth himself very uprightly. My Lord Leicester is very much with her majesty, and she sheweth the same great good affection to him that she was wont of late, he hath endeavoured to please her more than heretofore. There are two sisters now in the court that are very far in love with him, as they have been long, my Lady Sheffield, and Frances Howard * they of like striving who shall love him better are at great wars together, and the queen thinketh not well of them, and not the better of him, by this means there is spies over him. My Lord of Sussex goeth with the tide, and helpeth to back others, but his own credit is sober, considering his estate he is very diligent in his office, and takes great pains. My Lord of Oxford is lately grown into great credit, for the Queen's Majesty delighteth more in his personage, and his dancing and valiantness, than any other. I think Sussex doth back him all that he can, if it were not for his fickle head, he would soon pass any of them shortly. My Lady Burghley† unwisely has declared herself (as it were) jealous, which is come to the queen's ear; whereto she hath been not a little offended with her, but now she is reconciled again. At all these love matters my Lord of Sussex winketh,

of a consumption, in great danger; and, as your lordship knoweth, he hath been in displeasure these two years: it was made the queen believe that his sickness came because of the continuance of her displeasure towards him, that, unless she would forgive him, he was like not to recover; and hereupon her Majesty hath forgiven him, and sent unto him a very comfortable message: now he is recovered again, and this is the beginning of this device. These things I learn of such young fellows as myself.”*

On the 23rd of May, Lord Talbot informed his father that the queen was desirous of making a progress to Bristol, but that it was wished to dissuade her from going so far on account of the unseasonableness of the weather; and he added, “Mr. Hatton, by reason of his great sickness, is minded to go to the Spa for the better recovery of his health.”† On the 29th of May, an order was signed by the Privy Council for allowing Hatton “to pass over the seas for the better recovery of his health;”‡ and the deep solicitude which the queen felt about him was shown by her causing him to be accompanied by Dr. Talis, the eminent court physician. Hatton took leave of Elizabeth on the 3rd of June, and few letters have ever been published more curious than those written by him to her majesty during his absence, which recently for the first time saw the light. It appears that she had given him the singular appellation of “Lids” or “Lyddes;”§ but he sometimes subscribed his letters with a cypher; and that those which he wrote to her had no other address than another cipher. The style of his correspondence is that of an ardent and successful lover, separated by distance and illness from a mistress, rather than that of a subject to his sovereign.

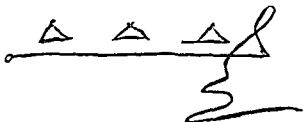
On the 5th of June, Hatton wrote the following reply to some letters which he had received from the queen, though only two days had elapsed since he quitted her presence:—

* Shrewsbury Papers in the College of Arms. F. Fo. 79.

† Hunter’s “History of Hallamshire.”

‡ Privy Council Books.

§ Some expressions in his letters tend to show that the name was “lids”—*i.e.*, “eyelids;” and if so, Hatton’s were perhaps peculiar.



"If I could express my feelings of your gracious letters, I should utter unto you matter of strange effect. In reading of them, with my tears I blot them. In thinking of them I feel so great comfort, that I find cause, as God knoweth, to thank you on my knees. Death had been much more advantage than to win health and life by so loathsome a pilgrimage.

"The time of two days hath drawn me further from you than ten, when I return, can lead me towards you. Madam, I find the greatest lack that ever poor wretch sustained. No death, no, not hell, no fear of death shall ever win of me my consent so far to wrong myself again as to be absent from you one day. God grant my return. I will perform this vow. I lack that I live by. The more I find this lack, the further I go from you. Shame whippeth me forward. Shame take them that counselled me to it. The life (as you well remember) is too long that loathsomely lasteth. A true saying, madam. Believe him that hath proved it. The great wisdom I find in your letters, with your country counsels are very testable, but the last word is worth the bible. Truth, truth, truth. Ever may it dwell in you. I will ever deserve it. My spirit and soul (I feel) agree with my body and life, that to serve you is a heaven, but to lack you is more than hell's torment unto them. My heart is full of woe. Pardon (for God's sake) my tedious writing. It doth much diminish (for the time) my grief. I will wash away the faults of these tears with the drops from your poor Lydds and so close them. Would God I were with you but for one hour. My wits are overwrought with thoughts. I find myself amazed. Bear with me, my most dear sweet lady. Passion overcometh me. I can write no

more. Love me, for I love you. God, I beseech thee witness the same on the behalf of thy poor servant. Live for ever. Shall I utter this familiar term (farewell)? yea, ten thousand thousand farewells. He speaketh it that most dearly loveth you. I hold you too long. Once again I crave pardon, and so bid your own poor Lidds farewell. 1573, June.

“Your bondman everlastingly tied,

“CH. HATTON.”*

The faithful historian Camden records, that—“Hatton was a man of a pious nature, and of an opinion that in matters of religion neither fire nor sword was to be used; a great reliever of the poor, and of sanguine bounty and munificence to students and learned men, for which reason, those of Oxford chose him Chancellor of their University.” He succeeded the favourite, Leicester, in that dignified office, in September 1588.

His death on the 20th of November, 1591, has been ascribed in great measure to the harshness and suddenness with which Elizabeth demanded the instant payment of a great sum in his hands, arising from the collection of first-fruits and tenths. “He had hopes,” says Camden, in regard to the favour he was in with her, “she would have forgiven him; but she could not, having once sent him down, raise him up again, though she visited him, and endeavoured to comfort him.” He died a bachelor, and was buried in St. Paul’s Cathedral.

“He was a gentleman,” says Sir Robert Naunton, “that besides the graces of his person and dancing, had also the adjunctments of a strong and subtle capacity: one that could soon learn the discipline and garb both of the times and court. The truth is, he had a large proportion of gifts and endowments, but too much of the season of envy, and he was a mere vegetable of the court, that sprung up at night, and sunk again at his noon.”

* Autograph in the State Paper Office.

That his position rendered him an object of envy cannot be doubted, but he seems to have made more friends and fewer enemies than any other ROYAL FAVOURITE.

When Leicester began to dread the advancement of Raleigh, he determined to oppose his career by the introduction of a new rival in the person of his stepson, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. Although inferior to Raleigh in natural abilities, his youth, and address, and spirit soon captivated Elizabeth. The queen chose this young man of twenty to command her horse at a moment when superior military skill to direct the bravery of her troops was, perhaps, more important than the wisdom of her ministers to support her crown. At Tilbury she ostentatiously displayed her fondness for him in the eyes of the whole army, and decorated him for his bloodless services with that splendid order of knighthood, the Garter, which she had frequently denied to the best and noblest of her tried servants. Till this juncture, Elizabeth had been able to conceal that extravagant partiality which shortly after astonished all Europe. On Leicester's death, in the autumn of 1588, Essex instantly rose to a measure of favour that still remains a most remarkable paradox in English history. He sought it not—it pursued him. In the following spring he fled, unpermitted, from court, and sailed, a volunteer, to Portugal with Norris and Drake. He was recalled by the Privy Council, but to this summons Essex gave no heed, and did not present himself at court until after the receipt of a threatening letter from Elizabeth's own hand, commanding his return. At the sight of him, all her threats were revoked, he returned to new grace, not to injury and punishment. Elizabeth admired brave men, and threw into the scale of his merits the gallantry with which he had fought during his absence.

Essex now found the court divided by the factions of two competitors for the queen's favour—Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Charles Blount, the second son of Lord Mountjoy, a student of the Inner Temple, whom the queen had singled out from among the spectators as she dined one day in public, inquired his name, gave him her hand to kiss, and bade him come to court. This was sufficient to point Blount out to

Raleigh as a rival; but Essex assumed a proud superiority over them both, for when Raleigh ventured to come into collision with him, Elizabeth ordered him to leave England, and "go and plant his 12,000 acres in Ireland."

Blount having one day shown his superior skill in a tilting match, Elizabeth bound upon his arm with a crimson ribbon a chess queen of gold, which having caught the eye of Essex as Blount left the presence, the prime favourite exclaimed aloud, "Now every fool must have his favour." The pride of Blount demanded satisfaction for this insult. They fought. Essex was wounded in the thigh. When the queen heard of his mishap, she swore with great seeming wrath that "some one or other should take him down, or there would be no ruling him." Still the queen's vanity was highly gratified with the conceit that her beauty had been the ground of their quarrel; and there can be little doubt that the speech was meant to disguise her real sentiments. Such a favourite as Essex could not have offended a woman of Elizabeth's character by contending for her good graces.

The clandestine marriage of Essex with Sir Philip Sidney's widow, shortly afterwards, provoked the queen's resentment to the uttermost, though she dissembled, and ascribed her anger to the inequality of the match, by which she alleged that the honour of the earl was disparaged.

After his return from Cadiz, Essex was more favourably received by Elizabeth than by her ministers, whom he found inclined to censure every part of his conduct in that expedition. The earl was deeply mortified, and his royal mistress, who seems to have shared his chagrin, in order to console him, made him a gift for life of the Mastership of the Ordnance. He then made the Island voyage, and during his absence the Admiral Howard had been created Earl of Nottingham, for, as his patent said, the reduction of Cadiz, which was ascribed to *his* good service, although really the merit belonged to Essex. This affront produced a disgust in the earl, which became publicly visible. He retired into the country, pleading illness to excuse his attendance in the parliament then sitting. Elizabeth again appeased him by

raising him, in December, 1597, to the splendid office of Earl Marshal of England. Essex now appeared in the character of a statesman, for which he possessed every qualification but patience.

The natural impetuosity of his temper now caused Essex frequently to treat the queen with rudeness and contempt, which she patiently bore till, in argument on the affairs of Ireland, the freedom of his contradictions provoked her to strike him, and he fled in a furious rage from court. Elizabeth, however, withdrew him with difficulty from the privacy of home, to make him Governor of Ireland, for which office he was singularly unqualified.

During the interval which preceded his departure for the seat of his new government, Essex evidently gave way to a moody and jealous frame of mind, that prompted the petulant favourite to seek relief in some violent outbreak. An opportunity presented itself at one of the last festivities of Elizabeth's reign, which she may be said to have enjoyed through the fresh contentions to which it gave rise between her favourites. On the celebration of the queen's birthday, Raleigh appeared in the tilt-yard at Westminster with a degree of splendour which roused the jealousy of Essex, and stimulated him, as it is said, to aim at the deadly injury of the knight during the mimic contests. Among other "braveries," Raleigh rejoiced in a suit of armour, so costly as to excite the envy of all those court rufflers who were the slaves of that " vexation of spirit " which has truly been described as the successor of vanity. In this gorgeous encasement Raleigh so much delighted, that his portrait was painted while wearing it, and he is supposed to have figured in it on this occasion; for in the portrait his arm was decorated with a riband which, tradition asserts, he received from the queen as a reward in this very tilt-yard, and which he carried to her majesty one morning to show that he had ridden a hundred and twenty miles the night before, in order to return to her presence.* The shoes of this accomplished courtier were valued at six thousand pieces of gold, his sword and belt were adorned with precious stones, and about his person he wore

jewels to the value of threescore thousand pounds, one diamond alone being worth a hundred pounds. Yet Raleigh, now in the forty-seventh year of his age, and disfigured, according to his own account, with a "lame leg, and deformed," could not, in all this splendour of appearance, cope with the gay and gallant bearing of Essex, whose very foibles were of a description to sort with the turbulence and mimic war of a tournament. That which in Raleigh was design, appeared in Essex the overflowing of an ardent and valiant temperament, sacrificing, at the shrine of the queen's vanity, the tribute which the young and beautiful might envy. Nothing, however, could be more childish than the mode in which their rivalry was carried on, as the following incident of the tawny feathers sufficiently exemplifies. Whilst Essex was in disgrace with the queen, after the celebrated interview in which he, with more natural feeling than gallantry, resented the royal blow on the ear, he learned that Raleigh intended to appear on the following day in the tilt-yard with a gallant train, all splendidly accoutred in orange-coloured feathers. Upon hearing this, Essex mustered a far more numerous retinue, all of whom he adorned with feathers similar to those worn by the Raleigh party; and so lavish was he of those ensigns, that he caused two thousand of them to be worn in the tilt-yard.* He then appeared as the leader of this radiant band, himself in a complete suit of orange-colour, and thus, being mistaken as the chief of the whole of those in orange, confounded all distinction between himself and Raleigh. This "feather triumph," as Lord Clarendon calls it, affords an example of the taste in which Elizabeth's favourites carried on their contentions during the strange alternations of frivolity and wisdom by which her reign was characterized. Yet the victory of Essex in this petty contest was incomplete; and on the following day, a knight being observed in green, in lieu of him who had figured in orange, it was remarked that "he had changed his colour, because he had run so ill." This disguised and disgraced knight is conjectured to have been Essex.

* Clarendon's "Disparity between Essex and Buckingham."

Whilst Viceroy of Ireland his want of statesmanship was signally apparent, his measures then being ill-judged and worse executed. A letter from Elizabeth, full of bitter reproaches, caused him to anticipate her vengeance, and the consequent triumph of his enemies at home irritated him to the brink of frenzy. He returned to England secretly, and threw himself at the queen's feet. She received him kindly, but referred the consideration of his case to her Privy Council. He was deprived of his offices, and retired into the country. Could he have waited patiently, he would probably have been restored to full favour, but his sensitive mind had lost all reasonable power of guiding his conduct. He returned to London, and rashly entered into the conspiracy which cost him his life, for Elizabeth, overpowered by terror, although her affection was unimpaired, consigned him to the block.

The celebrated story of the ring is thus related by Lady Elizabeth Spelman, the great granddaughter of Sir Robert Cary, whom Queen Elizabeth sent for in her last illness — When the Countess of Nottingham was dying, she sent to entreat the queen to visit her, as she had something to reveal before she could die in peace. On the queen's coming, Lady Nottingham told her that when the Earl of Essex was lying under sentence of death, he was desirous to ask her majesty's mercy in the manner she had prescribed during the height of his favour. Being doubtful of those about him, and unwilling to trust any of them, he called a boy whom he saw passing beneath his window, whose appearance pleased him, and engaged him to carry the ring, which he threw down to him, to the Lady Scrope, a sister of Lady Nottingham, a friend of the earl, who was also in attendance on the queen, and to beg her to present it to her majesty. The boy, by mistake, took it to Lady Nottingham, who showed it to her husband in order to take his advice. The earl forbade her to carry it to the queen, or return any answer to the message, but desired her to retain the ring. Lady Nottingham, having made this confession, entreated the queen's forgiveness, but Elizabeth, exclaiming, 'God may forgive you, but I never can!' left the room in great emotion, and was so richly agitated and distressed that she

refused to go to bed, nor would she for a long time take any sustenance. Some accounts of this painful scene state that Elizabeth, in a transport of mingled grief and fury, shook, or, as others say, struck, the wretched countess in her bed.

There are two rings claiming to be the identical one retained so fatally by Lady Nottingham: one preserved at Hawnes, in Bedfordshire, and now in the possession of the Rev. Lord John Thynne; the other is the property of C. W. Warner, Esq. This latter ring was given by Charles I. to Sir Thomas Warner, the settler of Antigua, Nevis, and other islands in the West Indies. It has continued in the possession of his descendants to the present time, with the tradition attached to it—on what authority is not known—that it is the identical ring given by Queen Elizabeth to Essex.

What a hurricane of passions and emotions, pride and anger struggling against tenderness and love, must have torn the heart of Elizabeth during the week that elapsed between the condemnation and the execution of Essex! Urged by the dominant faction, she signed the warrant for execution; relenting, she sent Edmund Cary to countermand it. Days passed, yet no petition, no token reached her from the prisoner. Under his supposed obstinacy in refusing to implore mercy, her anger was again awakened, and suited too well the machinations of his enemies. She sent off Mr. Darcy with an order to execute the warrant, which this time was not recalled.

So perished the gallant and accomplished Essex, in the pride and vigour of life, at thirty-three. Brave, eloquent, generous, and sincere; proud, imprudent, and violent—his fate is a lesson. Elizabeth Tudor survived her last favourite but two years, gradually sinking under a regular abate of strength and spirits, the commencement of which proved to have been observed almost immediately after death. Comte Harsley de Beaumont was the ambassador at the court of London, and extracts from original despatches show that, in May and June, 1601, queen told De Beaumont that she was tired of life, for thing now contented her spirit or gave her any enjy.

She talked to him of Essex with sighs, and almost with tears. Another account says, "Our queen is troubled with a rheum in her arm, which vexeth her very much, besides the grief which she hath conceived for the death of my Lord of Essex. She sleepeth not so much by day as she used, neither taketh rest by night. Her delight is to sit in the dark, and sometimes with shedding tears to bewail Essex." There exist other proofs that, even at that time, grief for the death of Essex was one of the causes to which her death was ascribed. But to those who may take the pains to examine carefully the numerous notices which remain an indubitable authority of her decay, and the expressions which fell from her during its progress, it will be evident that her life fell a sacrifice to the premature loss of him who was her last and most cherished Favourite.

The fate of the ill-starred Charles Blount, afterwards Earl of Devonshire, was somewhat remarkable. An attachment unfortunately sprung up in early life between the handsome Blount and the Lady Penelope—the sister of Essex, his generous rival—whilst she was still under the guardianship of the Court of Wards. Their ardent love was privately sealed by an interchange of marriage vows, but the lady was forced into a union with the wealthy Robert, Lord Rich, and a guilty connexion between the lovers followed, which remained for some years unobserved. Lady Rich at length abandoned her husband, taking with her five children whom she declared to be the issue of the earl. He received her with what mournful cordiality may easily be imagined, and on her divorce from Lord Rich, which immediately followed, was married to her by Laud, then the earl's domestic chaplain, at Wanstead, in Essex. James on that occasion harshly remarked to the earl, "You have married a fair woman with a foul heart." The unhappy nobleman deeply felt the king's coarse taunt. His worldly prospects were marred by the union, and unable to bear the weight of the bitter public reflections which it had excited, he died of a broken heart, having survived this wretched marriage but a few months. The earldom of Devonshire passed into the family of Cavendish.



CHAPTER VII.

MARY STUART AND CHASTELÂR.

I.

THE POET-FAVOURITE OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

THE peerless Mary Stuart was still in her blooming teens when, by the death of her young husband, Francis II., bereft alike of wedded love and regal supremacy in the "land of the lilies," and abandoned wholly to her sorrows, she reluctantly quitted that fair France she loved so well, to seek once more in doubt and danger the rugged shores of her native realm.

Admiration for the *Reine Blanche** was at that time not confined to France and Scotland; it was European. Can an impulse so universal be wondered at when we gaze on her portraits? All about her yielded to the resistless charm of that beauteous face and form, which only to look on was to love. Contemporary poets might aptly say that "the loveliest rose of Scotia bloomed on the topmost branch." Ronsard and Du Bellay called her the *tenth* Muse. Yet, after all the rhapsodies of the poets, she was rather worshipped as a real woman, endowed with infinite perfections, than as a mythical ideal—and that with a devotion as touching as it was chivalrous in its hopeless generosity.

* Mary was called "La Reine Blanche," from having mourned forty days in white for her first husband, Francis II.

Unhappily, the favour of the lovely Stuart was as signally disastrous to those upon whom it lighted as her own "fatal gift of beauty" proved to herself. There is a strange, sad moral in the history of this beautiful queen. "Probably the gift that women most desire, beyond riches, wisdom, even virtue itself," remarks a recent writer,* "is a power of fascination over the other sex" and this dangerous charm must have been possessed by Mary to a degree that in the days of Greece and Rome would have been attributed to supernatural influence. With all her advantages of rank, talent, and education, this very quality, so far from adding to her happiness, seems to have been the one engine which worked her destruction, and that of every kindly heart that came within her sphere. Of all the eminently beautiful women the world has seen, Mary Stuart wrought the most of wreck and utter ruin with the kindest disposition and best intentions. Delilah, we have never doubted, was a heartless sensualist, covetous only of pleasure and gold. The Phrynes and Aspasia were, probably, finished courtesans, with whom the affections were but instruments necessary to a profession of which they were thorough mistresses. Cleopatra, like a royal voluptuary, grudged no price for her desire, and in her love of conquest, blazoned forth and made the most of her rich southern charms. Marguerite de Valois knew and cultivated her resplendent beauty with the diligence of a devotee and the scientific aptitude of a Frenchwoman. But the Queen of Scots alone seems to have been half ignorant and wholly careless of those advantages which women most prize and cherish—seems to have regarded her loveliness as little as the flower its fragrance, and to have gone about frankly and freely dispensing her dangerous notice with the innocence of an involuntary and unconscious coquette.

Of physical beauty there is no question that she possessed an extraordinary share, perhaps more than any woman of that or any other age. Like her mother (Mary of Lorraine), she was of lofty stature and peculiar dignity of bearing, whilst she inherited from her father an exact symmetry and

* Whyte Melville, "The Queen's Marriages."

the most graceful proportions. James V., though he made bad use of his physical advantages, was one of the comeliest and best-limbed men in his dominions. Mary's hand was a model for a sculptor, whilst every gesture and every movement of her body was at once womanly and dignified. But it was the queen's face that riveted the attention and fascinated both sexes with its entrancing loveliness. Other women might be beautiful; other women might have had the same smooth, open brow, the same chiselled features and pencilled eyebrows, the same delicate chin, and white, full neck and bosom, ay, even the same long, soft hazel eyes, and rich, dark chestnut hair; but where was the woman in Europe whose glance, like hers, raised from under those sweeping eyelashes, found its way straight to the heart? whose smile seemed at once to entreat and command, to extort obedience and bestow reward, like sunlight penetrating the coldest object, and warming and brightening all within its sphere?

Since her return from France to the land of her birth, the young sovereign had "behaved herself in a manner so princely, honourably, and discreetly," and was at the same time so courteous and affable, that, with the assistance of Knox and his followers—whose judgment cannot be supposed unprejudiced—she had gained the universal love and approbation of her subjects—no easy task, considering the conflict of selfish interests around her. She treated gravely of affairs of state with her council, sitting all the while over her embroidery frame, quietly and demurely plying her needle. Hunting, hawking, and other sports filled up the day; and music and dancing were the usual amusements of the evening. The majority of her subjects made allowance for their queen's youth, gaiety, and beauty; and, so long as she discharged her duties in a grave and princely manner, did not blame her for endeavouring to enliven the court of her native kingdom with some shadow of the festivities which had surrounded her while on the throne of France. Unimpeachable in her public conduct, the accomplished princess loved to retire into something like private society, but always with the honourable attendance of her ladies, and accessible

to the ambassadors who resided at her court. When Randolph, the English envoy, once pressed matters of state upon her at such a moment, "I see," she said, "you are weary of this reception. You had better preserve your diplomatic gravity, and return to Edinburgh, and keep all your weighty conversation till the queen returns there, for I promise you, I do not know myself what is now become of her, or when she will return to her throne and canopy of state."

Mary—at this epoch of her life more the heroine of romance than of history—was herself conscious, it would seem, of her tendency to this easy pleasantry, and had an apprehension that in an unguarded moment it might be carried too far. Indeed, a melancholy instance of this did occur in the case of one of her suite. The girl queen had the good sense, shortly after her enthronement in the gloomy halls of Holyrood, to dismiss most of her French followers. It would have been well had the poet Chastelâr been among the number. Young, handsome, and well-born, his romantic disposition and undoubted talents had rendered him an especial favourite in the gay circles of the court of France, where so many of its nobility had congregated round the youthful consort of Francis, to pay their homage as much to her beauty as to her sovereignty. To look on Chastelâr, with his long, dark curls, and his bright eyes, was to behold the poet-type in its most attractive form, and when to beauty of feature and culture of mind were added a graceful figure, skill in horsemanship—as in all knightly exercises—great kindness of disposition, and gentle mirth, what wonder that with the ladies of Mary's court, to be in love with Chastelâr was as indispensable a fashion as to wear a pointed stomacher or a delicate lace edging to the ruff? And Chastelâr, with true poet nature, sunned himself in their smiles, and enjoyed life intensely—as only such natures can—and bore about with him the while, unsuspected, an incurable sorrow near akin to madness in his heart.

Chastelâr was a nephew on his mother's side of the renowned knight, "*sans peur et sans reproche*," Bayard, and a native of Dauphny. At an early age he had entered the

household of the Constable Montmorency, and was afterwards promoted to that of the Marshal d'Amville. Firmly attached from childhood to the illustrious house of Montmorency, he was one of those gallant and loyal gentlemen who followed its fortunes, alike ready to share the disgrace or favour which was reflected by turns, as the event might be, from chief to retainer. Possessing the defects as well as the good qualities of the men of that day—imaginative, intellectual, brave, a duellist, indifferent as to religious matters, and a poet in his hours of love and leisure—at the court of the Louvre, among the gay and glittering retinue of Catherine de' Medici, Chastelâr was held pre-eminently *à la mode*—in its *salons* by his wit and courtesy, in its duels by his courage and address. Hitherto he had trifled with love as he had with danger. When his duties as a gentleman and a soldier were fulfilled, and the marshal had nothing further to require of him, Chastelâr thought only of penning some quatrain wherewith to insinuate himself the more willingly into some fair one's heart, or was equally ready to do battle for the friend or mistress whose colours he wore. He had had several brilliant affairs of honour, and the boatmen of the Seine knew him well, for more than twice or thrice had they ferried him across from the Louvre shore to that of the *Prê-aux-Clercs* opposite. Chastelâr had indeed figured conspicuously among the heroes of that rendezvous for measuring swords; and in those days great was such *prestige* both in court and city, and a high recommendation even to princesses of the blood as well as to fair dames and demoiselles of quality. Chastelâr owed more than one conquest to the renown thus acquired for skill and valour. Even Ronsard had allowed himself to be captivated by the halo of wit and gallantry which hovered around Chastelâr. From the height of that poetic throne upon which his contemporaries had placed him, he had deigned to encourage and applaud the inspirations of the enterprising youth who, without rest or truce, pursued at one and the same time military glory, literary fame, and ladies' love:—

Mary, in return for these gallant verses, sent the author from Holyrood a magnificent buffet of chased silver plate, which cost two thousand crowns, with the inscription, "*A Ronsard, l'Apollo François*" This royal guerdon was placed in charge of Chastelâr, to deliver among other tokens and pledges of the *White Queen's* enduring love for her most cherished, pleasant land of France

Unhappily for the amiable and light-hearted Mary, excessive familiarity and undue favouritism exposed her at this time to slanderous attacks The respect due to the queen was forgotten in the great liberty allowed by the woman One Captain Hepburn ventured to behave towards her with brutal indecacy, and escaped punishment only by flight His example did not, however, serve as a warning to the unfortunate Chastelâr That fervid lyricist addressed her in frenzied verses, which too plainly revealed his invincible passion

' O déesse
Ces buissons et ces arbres
Qui sont entour de moy,
Ces rochers et ces marbres,
Savent bien mon emoy,

' Bref rien de la nature
N'ignore ma blessure,
Fors seulement
Toi que prende nourriture
En mon cruel tourment.

' Mais s'il t'est agréable
De me voir misérable
En tourment tel
Mon malheur d'plorable
Soit sur moy immortel !'

Mary replied to these effusions by others of responsive sentiment, and so kindled the already heated imagination of the devoted young man, that it reached the verge of delirium and madness On his return to France, at the time of the first civil war, he had felt no disposition to march with D'Amville against his co-religionists, the Huguenots, or join the Huguenots against his liege lord D'Amville, and had consequently taken an early opportunity to revisit Scotland

He arrived secretly in Edinburgh, without apprising any one in that city of his movements.

Mary Stuart was sitting one morning in her favourite bower at Holyrood, surrounded by those youthful maids of honour who had attended her in France, and to whom she had become so greatly attached—for they were her countrywomen, and of the same age as herself. The young and lovely princess was engaged at her embroidery frame, laughing and chatting with her four attendant Maries, when the gentleman usher, who stood at the door of the apartment, entered, and with a low obeisance presented a letter to the queen. Mary took the missive with a gracious smile from the person presenting it, and contemplating it for a moment before she opened it, with a look of pleased surprise—for it was curiously, or rather, fancifully, folded, tied with green silk thread, and highly perfumed:—

“This surely,” she said, “is from none of our Scottish subjects: the fold is French.” And she sighed. “It hath the cut and fashion of the *billet-doux* at St. Germain, and,” she added, laughing, “the precise flavour too, I dare avouch. But I should know this handwriting,” she went on; “I have seen it before. This, however, will solve the mystery.” And she tore the letter open, and was instantly employed in reading it, blushing and smiling by turns, as she proceeded with the perusal. When she had done, “Mary Seton,” she said, raising her eyes from the paper, and addressing that one of the bevy nearest her, “whom, think you, this letter is from?”

“I cannot guess, madam,” replied the young lady appealed to.

“Do try,” rejoined Mary.

“Nay, indeed I cannot,” said the former, now pausing in her work, and looking laughingly at her royal mistress. “Perhaps from the Count Desmartine, or from Dufour, or Dubois?”

“No, no, no,” replied the queen, laughing; “neither of these, Mary. But I will have compassion on your curiosity, and tell you. Would you believe it?—it is from Chastelâr, the poet.”

"Chastelâr!" repeated the maiden, in amazement, "what in all the earth can have brought him here?"

"Nay, I know not," said the queen, blushing—for she guessed, or rather, feared the cause—"But read and judge for yourself," she added, handing her attendant the letter, which contained a very beautiful laudatory poem, full of feeling and passion, addressed to herself, and which the writer concluded by requesting that he might be permitted to form part of her court, declaring that it would be joy inexpressible for him to be near her person, he cared not in how mean or lowly a capacity. The having opportunities of seeing and serving her, he said, would reconcile him to any degradation of rank, to any loss—save that of honour.

"In sooth, very pretty ver es," said the maid of honour, returning the poem to the queen, "but, methinks, somewhat over bold."

"Why, I do think so too, Mary. Chastelâr rather forgets himself, but poets, you know, have a licence, and I cannot be harsh to the poor young man. It would be cruel, ungenerous, and unworthy of me."

"But what say you, madam, to his request to be attached to your court?"

"As to that, I know not well what to say, indeed," rejoined the queen. "Chastelâr, you know, Mary, is a gentleman, both by birth and education. He is accomplished in a very high degree, and of a graceful person and pleasing manners, and would thus do no discredit to our court, but, I fear me, he might be guilty of some indiscretions—for he is a child of passion as well as of song—that might lead him into danger, and bring some blame on me. Still, I cannot think of rejecting altogether his humble suit, so prettily preferred, and if he would promise to conduct himself with becoming gravity and reserve in all matters, and at all times avoid ruffling and duelling, I object not that he be attached to our court. I will, at all events, make trial of him for a short space—Kerr," she now called out to a page in waiting, "go to the hostelry whence this letter came, and say to the gentleman by whom it has been sent, that we

desire to see him forthwith. And let him accompany you, Kerr."

In a short time after the messenger had been despatched with the invitation to Chastelâr, the door of the queen's apartment was thrown wide open, and that person entered. His bow to the queen was exceedingly graceful, and not less so, though measured with scrupulous exactness in their difference of expression, were those he directed to her ladies. Chastelâr's countenance was at this instant suffused with a vivid blush, and it was evident that he was under the excitement of highly agitated feelings, but he lost not for a moment, nor in the slightest degree, his presence of mind; neither did these feelings prevent him conducting himself at this interview with the most perfect propriety.

"Chastelâr," said the queen, after the ceremonies of a first salutation were over, "I perceive you have lost none of your cunning in the gentle craft. Those were really pretty lines you sent me, choice in expression, and melodiously attuned. I assure you it is a very happy piece."

"How could it be otherwise, madam," replied Chastelâr, bowing low, "with such a subject?"

"Nay, nay," said Mary, laughing and blushing at the same time, "I am no subject, Chastelâr, but an anointed queen. Thou canst not make a subject of me."

Chastelâr now blushed in turn, and said, smiling, "Your wit, madam, has thrown me out; but, avoiding this play on words, my position is good, undeniable. All men acknowledge it."

"Go to, go to, Chastelâr; thou wert ever a flatterer. But 'tis a poet's trade. Thou art a dangerous flatterer, however; for thou dost praise so prettily that one cannot suspect thy sincerity, nor be angry with thee, even when thou deservest that one should. But enough of this in the meantime. You may now retire, O prince of troubadours, and I think the sooner the better, for the safety of these fair maidens' hearts, and your own peace of mind, which a longer stay might endanger. Our chamberlain will provide thee with suitable apartments, and see to thy wants.—Mark," she added,

"Chastelâr!" repeated the maiden, in amazement, "what in all the earth can have brought him here?"

"Nay, I know not," said the queen, blushing—for she guessed, or rather, feared the cause. "But read and judge for yourself," she added, handing her attendant the letter, which contained a very beautiful laudatory poem, full of feeling and passion, addressed to herself, and which the writer concluded by requesting that he might be permitted to form part of her court, declaring that it would be joy inexpressible for him to be near her person, he cared not in how mean or lowly a capacity. The having opportunities of seeing and serving her, he said, would reconcile him to any degradation of rank, to any loss—save that of honour.

"In sooth, very pretty verses," said the maid of honour, returning the poem to the queen, "but, methinks, somewhat over-bold."

"Why, I do think so too, Mary. Chastelâr rather forgets himself, but poets, you know, have a licence, and I cannot be harsh to the poor young man. It would be cruel, ungenerous, and unworthy of me."

"But what say you, madam, to his request to be attached to your court?"

"As to that, I know not well what to say, indeed," rejoined the queen. "Chastelâr, you know, Mary, is a gentleman, both by birth and education. He is accomplished in a very high degree, and of a graceful person and pleasing manners, and would thus do no discredit to our court, but, I fear me, he might be guilty of some indiscretions—for he is a child of passion as well as of song—that might lead him into danger, and bring some blame on me. Still, I cannot think of rejecting altogether his humble suit, so prettily preferred, and if he would promise to conduct himself with becoming gravity and reserve in all matters, and at all times avoid ruffling and duelling, I object not that he be attached to our court. I will, at all events, make trial of him for a short space—Kerr," she now called out to a page in waiting, "go to the hostelry whence this letter came, and say to the gentleman by whom it has been sent, that we

desire to see him forthwith. And let him accompany you, Kerr."

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"Through his own direct application, my lord. He addressed a poetical epistle to her grace, I understand, from Goodal's hostelry, where he had taken up his quarters in the first place, requesting permission to wait upon her."

"And it was granted?" interrupted the earl.

"It was, my lord; and he has already had an audience."

"Ah! 'so!" said the earl, without having, during any part of this conversation, evinced the slightest emotion, or symptom of the deep interest he took in the communications which were being made to him. "Know ye," he went on, "if that favour is to be soon again conferred on him? When will he be again admitted to the presence?"

"That, my lord, rests on the queen's pleasure; but I hear say that he is to attend her this evening in her sitting apartment."

"So, so!" said the earl, nodding his head as he uttered the words; and turning on his heel, he walked away without further remark.

From the officer with whom he had just been speaking the Earl of Moray carefully concealed the motives which had prompted his inquiries, but determined henceforth to watch with the utmost vigilance the proceedings of the queen and Chastelâr, until some circumstance should occur that might put them both fairly within his power. Unaware of the dangerous surveillance under which he was already placed, it was with a delight which only he himself, perhaps, could feel, that Chastelâr received in the evening the promised invitation from the queen to attend her and her ladies in their sitting-chamber. The invitation was conveyed in some playful verses—an art in which Mary excelled—written on embossed paper. The enthusiastic poet read the delightful lines a thousand times over, dwelt with rapture on each word and phrase, and finally kissed the precious document with all the eagerness and fervour of highly excited and uncontrollable emotion. Having indulged in these tender susceptibilities for some time, Chastelâr at length folded up the unconscious object of his adoration, thrust it into his bosom, took up a small *port-feuille* covered with red morocco leather,

gilt and perfumed, the depositary of his poetical effusions, and hurried to the apartment of the queen, where he was speedily set to the task of reading his compositions for the entertainment of the assembled fair ones; and it is certain that on more than one of them, the tender and impassioned manner of the bard, as he recited his really beautiful verses, added to his highly prepossessing appearance and graceful delivery, made an impression by no means favourable to their night's repose. It would, however, perhaps be more tedious than interesting, were we to detail all that passed on the night in question in the queen's apartment, to record all the witty and pleasant things that were said and done by the queen, her ladies, and her poet. Be it enough to say that the latter retired at a pretty late hour; his imprudent passion, we cannot say increased, for of that it would not admit, but strengthened in its wild and ambitious hopes.

From that fatal night poor Chastelâr firmly believed that his love was returned; that he had inspired in the bosom of Mary a passion as ardent as his own. Into this unhappy error the poet's own heated and disturbed imagination had betrayed him, by representing in the light of special marks of favour occurrences that were merely the emanations of a kind and gentle nature—thus fatally misled by a passion which, if notorious for occasioning groundless fears, is no less so for inspiring unfounded hopes. Such, at any rate, was its effect in the case of Chastelâr on the night in question. On gaining his own chamber he flung himself into a chair, and spent nearly the whole of the remainder of the night in the indulgence of the wildest and most extravagant dreams of future bliss; for, in the blindness of his passion and tumult of his hopes, he saw no difficulties, and feared no dangers.

II.

THE FATE OF CHASTELÂR.

FROM this time forward Chastelâr's conduct to the queen became so marked and unguarded in many particulars as to excite her alarm, and even to draw down upon the offender some occasional rebukes, although these were at first sufficiently gentle and remote. If we are to believe the testimony of Knox, she had encouraged his advances by behaviour unbecoming the decency of an honest woman. The stern reformer especially condemns the unseemly familiarity with which the queen danced the *purpose** with the graceful Frenchman. "In this dance the queen chose Chastelâr, and Chastelâr took the queen. All this winter (1563) Chastelâr was so familiar in the queen's cabinet, early and late, that scarcely could any of the nobility have access unto her. The queen would lie on Chastelâr's shoulder, and sometimes privily would steal a kiss of his neck, and all this was honest enough, for it was the gentle entreatment of a stranger."

These are very artful and malicious words of the implacable Knox, and should be taken with reservation, mindful, as one ought to be, that the earnestness with which Mary engaged in these amusements, so befitting her age and disposition in the court of Scotland—which she animated by her taste and vivacity, and adorned by her grace and charms,—was considered unholy and profane by the Presbyterian ministers, and had exposed her to their severest reprehension. Many times had Knox mounted his pulpit to inveigh against the continued festivities of that joyous court, destined ere long to become so sad and desolate. "Princes," said he, "are more exercised in fiddling and flinging than in reading or hearing of God's most blessed word. Fiddlers and flatterers, who commonly corrupt the youth, are more precious

* The *purpose* was a measure very much resembling the coillon; and the word "purpose" signified confidential conversation, and might merge in flirtation, for which it gave excellent opportunity.

in their eyes than men of wisdom and gravity, who, by wholesome admonition, might beat down in them some part of that vanity and pride whereunto all are born, but in princes take root and strength by wicked education.”* Dancing was denounced as bitterly as music by this rigid censor, who did not fail to refer in his remarks upon it to the tragical history of Herodias and John the Baptist.

Neither did the favouritism of the queen, nor the imprudences of the infatuated poet, escape the cold, keen eye of Moray. He saw them and noted them, but took care to wear the semblance of unconsciousness. It was not his business to interrupt, by hinting suspicions, the progress of an affair which he hoped would, on some occasion or other, lead to consequences that he might turn to account. Feeling this, it was not for him to help Chastelâr and the queen to elude his vigilance and defeat his views, by discovering what he observed, and thus putting them on their guard. That was not his business; but it was his business to lie concealed, and to spring out on his quarry the instant that its position invited to the effort. Coldly and sternly, therefore, he watched the motions of Chastelâr and his sister; but was little satisfied to perceive nothing in the conduct of the latter regarding the former which at all spoke of the feelings he secretly desired to find. As it was impossible, however, for the earl personally to watch all the movements of Chastelâr, he looked around him for some individual of the queen's household whom he might bribe to perform the duties of a spy; and such a one he found among the attendants whom Mary had brought with her from France, of which country he was also a native. The name of this ungrateful and despicable wretch, who undertook to betray a kind and generous mistress, whenever he should discover anything in her conduct to betray, was Villemont—a man of pleasing manners and address, but of low and vicious habits. Without any certain knowledge of his character, or any previous information regarding him, Moray's sinister tact and penetration at once singled him out as a likely person for his purposes.

* Knox, vol. ii. p. 368.

On this presumption he sent for him, and cautiously and gradually opening him up, found that he had judged correctly of his man.

"Villemont," he said, on that person being ushered into his presence, "I have good reason to think that you are one in whom I may put trust, and, in this assurance, I have selected you for an especial mark of my confidence. Do you know anything of this Chastelâr who has lately come to court?"

"I do, my lord, he is a countryman of my own."

"So I understand. Well, then, I'll tell you what it is, Villemont. I believe the fellow has come here for no good, I believe, in short, that he has designs upon the queen. Now, my good fellow, will you undertake to ascertain this for me? Will you watch their proceedings, watch them narrowly, and give me instant information of anything suspicious that may come to your knowledge? and ye shall not miss of your reward," added the earl, now opening a little desk which stood before him, and taking from it a well filled purse.

Villemont, with many vows and grimaces, readily undertook to play the knave, and, with still more, took the price of his knavery, the purse already alluded to, which the earl now handed him.

Villemont again bowed low, and left the apartment.

In the meantime, the gallant, accomplished, but imprudent Chastelâr, hurried blindly along by the impetuosity of his passion, and altogether unsettled by the intoxicating belief that his love was returned—a belief which had now taken so fast a hold of his understanding that nothing could loosen it—proceeded from one impropriety to another, till he at length committed one which all but brought matters to a crisis, and this was avoided only by its having escaped the vigilance of Villemont, and having been compassionately concealed by the queen herself.

On retiring one night, early in February, 1563, to her sleeping apartment, Mary and her attendants were suddenly alarmed by an extraordinary movement in a small closet or wardrobe, in which was kept the clothes the queen was in

the habit of daily using. The maids of honour would have screamed out and fled from the apartment, but were checked in both of these feminine resorts by observing the calm and collected manner of their royal mistress, in which there was not the slightest appearance of perturbation.

"Ladies, ladies," she exclaimed, laughingly, as her attendants were about to rush out of the room, "what a pretty pair of heroines ye are! Shame! shame! Ye surely would not leave your mistress alone, in the midst of such a perilous adventure as this? Come hither," she added, at the same time stepping towards her toilet, and taking up a small silver lamp that burned on it, "and let us see who this intruder is—whether ghost or gallant."

Saying this—her ladies having returned, reassured by her intrepidity—she proceeded, with steady step, towards the suspected closet, seized the door by the handle, flung it boldly open, and discovered, to the astonished eyes of her attendants and to her own inexpressible amazement, the poet Chastelâr, armed with sword and dagger. For some seconds the queen uttered not a syllable, but a flush of indignation and insulted pride suffused her exquisitely lovely countenance.

"Chastelâr," she at length said, in a tone of calm severity, and with a dignity of manner becoming her high state and lineage, "come forth and answer for this daring and atrocious conduct, this unheard-of insolence and presumption." Chastelâr obeyed, and was about to throw himself at her feet, when she sternly forbade him.

"I want no apologies, presumptuous man," she said—"no craving of forgiveness. I want explanation of this infamous proceeding, and that I demand of you in the presence of my attendants here. Know ye not, sir," she went on, "that your head is forfeited by this offence, and that I have but to give the word and the forfeit will be exacted?"

"I know it, I know it," exclaimed Chastelâr, persisting in throwing himself on his knees; "but the threat has no terrors for me. It is your displeasure alone—fairest, brightest of God's creatures—that I fear. It is——"

"Peace, Chastelâr!" interrupted Mary, peremptorily.

"What mean ye by this language, sir? Would ye cut yourself off from all hope of pardon, by adding offence upon offence? Rise, sir, and leave this apartment instantly, I command you, I will now hear neither explanation nor apology."

"Then will you forgive me?" said Chastelâr, "will you forgive a presumption of which——"

"I will hear no more, sir," again interrupted the queen, indignantly. "Begone, sir! Remain another instant, and I give the alarm. Your life depends on your obedience." And Mary placed her hand on a small silver bell, from which had she drawn the slightest sound, the poet's doom would be sealed, and she would have rung his funeral knell.

Chastelâr now slowly rose from his knees, folded his arms across his breast, and with downcast look, but without uttering another word, strode out of the apartment. When he had gone, the queen, no longer supported by the excitement occasioned by the presence of the intruder, flung herself into a chair, greatly agitated and deadly pale. Here she sat in silence for several minutes, evidently employed in endeavouring to obtain a view of the late singular occurrence in all its bearings, and in determining on the course which she herself ought to pursue regarding it.

Having seemingly satisfied herself on these points—

"Ladies," she at length said (these ladies were two of her Maies, Mary Seton and Mary Hamilton), "this is a most extraordinary circumstance. Rash, thoughtless, presumptuous man, how could he have been so utterly lost to every sense of propriety, and of his own peril, as to think of an act of such daring insolence?"

"Poor man, I pity him," here simply, but naturally enough perhaps, interrupted Mary Seton. "Doubtless, madam, you will report the matter instantly to the earl?"

"Nay, Mary, I know not if I will, after all," replied the queen. "I perhaps ought to do so, but methinks it would be hardly creditable of me, as a woman, to bring this poor thoughtless young man to the scaffold, whither, you know, my stern brother would have him instantly dragged if he

knew of his offence ; and besides, ladies," went on the queen, in whose gentle bosom the kindly feelings of her nature had now completely triumphed over those of insulted dignity and pride, " I know not how far I am myself to blame in this matter. I fear me I ought to have been more guarded in my conduct towards this infatuated young man. I should have kept him at greater distance, and been more cautious of admitting him to familiar converse, since he has evidently misconstrued our affability and condescension. There may have been error there, you see, ladies."

" Yet," said Mary Hamilton, " methinks the daring insolence of the man ought not to go altogether unpunished, madam. If he has chosen to misconstrue, it can be no fault of yours."

" Perhaps not," replied Mary. " As a queen, certes I ought to give him up to the laws, but, as a woman, I cannot. Yet shall he not go unpunished. He shall be forthwith banished from our court and kingdom. To-morrow, I shall cause it to be intimated to him that he leave our court instantly and Scotland within four-and-twenty hours thereafter, on pain of our highest displeasure, and peril of disclosure of his crime."

Having thus spoken, and having obtained a promise of secrecy regarding Chastelâr's offence from her two attendants, Mary retired for the night, not, however, quite assured that she was pursuing the right course for her own reputation in thus screening the guilt of the poet ; but, nevertheless, determined at all risk to save him, in this instance at least, from the consequences of his indiscretion. On the following morning the queen despatched a note to Chastelâr, to the purpose which we have represented her as expressing on the preceding night ; and, in obedience to the command it contained, he instantly left the palace, but in a state of indescribable mental agitation and distraction ; for in the determination expressed by the queen he saw at once an end of his wild hopes, and, more unendurable still, an assurance that he had wholly mistaken the feelings with which Mary regarded him. We have said that Chastelâr obeyed one of

the injunctions of the queen—that was, to leave the palace instantly. He did so, but that, unhappily, he did not conform to the other, the sequel will show.

Two days after the occurrences just narrated, Mary set out for St Andrews, taking the route of the Queen's Ferry, and sleeping the first night at Dunfermline, and the second at Burnt Island. On the evening of her arrival at the latter place, the queen, fatigued by her journey, which had been prolonged by hunting and hawking, retired early to her apartment. An instant after entering the room she was startled at seeing Chastelâr emerge from behind the arras, and throw himself at her feet. Uttering loud cries, Mary by turns called for assistance and commanded him to begone.

Instead of obeying, the infuriated young man not only persisted in remaining in the position he was in, but, still keeping hold of the queen's robe, began to rave in the language of passion and love. The queen endeavoured to release her elf from his hold, and was in the act of attempting to do so, when the door of the apartment, which Chastelâr had closed behind him, was violently thrown open, and the Earl of Moray entered. Having advanced two or three steps, he stood still, and, folding his arms across his breast, looked sternly but in silence, first at the queen, and then at Chastelâr, keeping at the same time sufficiently near the door to prevent the escape of the latter, in case he should make such an attempt.

Mary Stuart, pale, breathless, and trembling, met the scrutinizing glance of her brother with a look of defiance and threatening, the peculiar frown of her race strongly imprinted on her fair and lofty brow.

"Shy him!" exclaimed the queen, in the first outburst of her indignation, "strike him down at my feet! Brother, an' ye have a drop of the Stuart blood in your veins, pass your sword through the traitor who has dared to put this mortal insult upon our house."

The queen's ladies, all scared and dismayed, followed by several officers of the household, bearing lights and naked

weapons, having now rushed in, stood staring at the trio with looks of inquiry and wonderment. Moray continued to gaze on all around for some time without opening his lips, but with an ominous expression of countenance.

"Well, Sir Poet," he at length said, addressing Chastelâr with cold deliberation, "pray do me the favour to enlighten me as to the meaning of your having thus intruded yourself into the queen's apartment. Why do I find you here, sir, and wherefore have I found you in the position from which you have just now risen? Pray, sir, explain."

"I came here, my lord," replied Chastelâr, with firmness and dignity, "to take leave of her majesty before returning to France, for which I set out to-morrow."

An ironical and incredulous smile played on the stern features of Moray.

"A strange place this, methinks, and a strange season for leave-taking, and yet stranger than all, the language in which I just now heard you speak. You are aware, I presume, sir," he added, "that you are just now in the queen's sleeping apartment, where none dare intrude, but on peril of their lives. But probably, madam," he said, now turning to the queen, without awaiting any reply to his last remark, "*you* can explain the meaning of this extraordinary scene?"

"You had better, my lord," replied Mary, evasively—for, in her pliant and forgiving nature, she was still reluctant to commit irretrievably the unfortunate young man—"obtain what explanations you desire from Chastelâr himself. He, surely, is the fittest person to explain his own conduct."

"True, madam," said Moray, sneeringly; "but I thought it not by any means improbable that you might be as well informed on the point in question as the gentleman himself."

"Your insinuation is rude, my lord," replied the queen, haughtily; and without vouchsafing any other remark, she walked away to the further end of the apartment, leaving the earl and Chastelâr together.

Moray now saw; from the perfectly composed and independent manner of the queen, that he could make out nothing to her prejudice from the case before him, nor elicit

the slightest evidence of anything like connivance, on the part of his sister, at Chastelâr's intrusion. Seeing this, he determined on proceeding against the unfortunate poet with the utmost rigour to which his imprudence had exposed him, in the hope that severity might wring from him such confessions as would implicate the queen.

Having come to this resolution,—

"Sir," he said, addressing Chastelâr, "prepare to abide the consequences of your presumption." And he proceeded to the door, called an attendant, and desired him to send the captain of the guard and a party to him instantly.

In a few minutes they appeared, when the earl, addressing the officer, and pointing to Chastelâr, desired him to put that gentleman in ward, and the latter was immediately hurried out of the apartment. The earl then walked up to Mary, who, with her head leaning pensively on her hand, had been silently contemplating the proceedings that were going forward.

"Madam," said Moray, on approaching her, "I think you may consider yourself in safety for this night,—at any rate, from any further intrusion from this itinerant versifier, and it shall be my fault should he ever again annoy you or any one else."

"What, brother!" exclaimed Mary, in evident alarm at this ambiguous but ominous hint, "you will not surely proceed to extremities against the unfortunate young man?"

"By St. Bride, but I will, though!" replied Moray, angrily. "Why, madam, have not your reputation as a woman and your dignity as a queen both been assailed by this insolent foreigner, in this daring act he has done?"

"Nay, my lord," replied the queen, haughtily, "methinks it will take much more than this to afflict my reputation. I indeed marvel much to hear you speak thus, my lord. My dignity, again, can be abased only by my own acts, and cannot be affected by the act of another."

"Nevertheless, madam," rejoined her brother, "ye cannot stop slanderous tongues, and I know not how the world may construe this circumstance. Both your honour and

station require that this presumptuous knave suffer the penalty of his crime in its utmost rigour. What would the world say else? It would have suspicions that ought not for an instant to be associated with the name of Mary Stuart."

"But you will not have his life taken, brother?" said Mary, in a gentle tone, subdued by the thoughts of the severe doom that threatened the unfortunate gentleman, and placing her hand affectionately on the earl's arm as she spoke. "Can ye not banish him forth of the realm, or imprison him?—anything short of death, which methinks would be, after all, hard measure for the offence."

"You have reasons, doubtless, madam," said the earl, coldly and bluntly, "for this tenderness."

"I have," said Mary, indignantly; "but not, my lord, such as you would seem to insinuate. My reasons are humanity and a feeling of compassion for the misguided and unhappy youth."

"Chastelâr shall have such mercy, madam, as your Majesty's Privy Council may deem him deserving of," replied the earl, turning round on his heel, and quitting the royal bedchamber.

On leaving the presence of the queen, the Earl of Moray retired to his own apartment, where he was shortly after waited upon by Villemont, who had been for some time watching his return.

"Ha, Villemont!" said the earl, with an unusual expression of satisfaction on his countenance, on the former's entrance. "Thou hast done well, friend; I found matters exactly as you stated, and am obliged by the promptness and accuracy of your information."

"Very happy, my lord, to serve you to your satisfaction," replied Villemont, bowing low.

"You did well, Villemont, and shall be suitably recompensed. Dost know how the fellow came here, and when?"

"He came across the river in a small barque, my lord, from just opposite."

"Ah, so!" said the earl "Well, you may now retire, Villemont To-morrow I shall see to your reward"

Villemont bowed and withdrew When he had retired, the earl sat down to a small escritoire, and, late as the hour was, began writing with great assiduity, an employment at which he continued until he had written eight or ten different letters, each of considerable length These were addressed to various members of the Queen's Privy Council in Edinburgh, and to some of the law officers of the crown They were all nearly copies of each other, and contained an account of Chastelâr's conduct, with a charge to the several parties addressed, to repair to St Andrews on the second day following, for the purpose of holding a court on the offender, and awarding him such punishment as the case might seem to demand

On the day succeeding that on which the occurrence just related took place, the queen and her retinue proceeded to St Andrews, whither the prisoner Chastelâr was also carried, and on the next again, the unfortunate gentleman was brought to trial, the scene of which was the hall in the castle of St Andrews, which had been hastily prepared for the occasion In the centre of this apartment was placed a large oblong oaken table, covered with crimson velvet, and surrounded by a circle of high backed chairs, with cushions covered with the same material These were subsequently occupied by eight or ten persons of the Privy Council, including Mary's Secretary of State, Maitland of Lethington, the Scottish Machiavel, who sat at one end of the table At the opposite end sat the Earl of Moray, the prisoner occupying a place in the centre at one of the sides During the investigation which followed into the offence of Chastelâr, the Earl of Moray made repeated indirect attempts to lead him to make statements prejudicial to the queen, urging him, with a show of candour and pretended regard for justice, to inform the court of anything and everything which he thought might be availing in his defence, without regard to the rank or condition of those whom such statements might implicate This language was too plain to be

misunderstood. Every one present perceived that it conveyed a pointed allusion to the queen. Chastelâr, amongst the rest, felt that it did so, and indignantly repelled the insinuation.

"I have none," he said, "to accuse but myself; nothing to blame but my own folly. Folly, did I say?" went on the fearless enthusiast; "it was no folly, it was love, love, love—all-powerful love—love for her, the noblest, the loveliest of created beings, for whom I could die ten thousand deaths. It was love for her who has been to me the breath of life, the light of mine eyes, the idol of my heart; around which were entwined all the feelings and susceptibilities of my nature, even as the ivy entwines the tree. The constant theme of my dreams by night; the sole object of my thoughts by day. It has been hinted to me that I may blame freely where to blame may serve me. But whom shall I blame? Not her, surely; for she is faultless as the unborn babe; pure, spotless as the snow-wreath in the hollow of the mountain. Who shall maintain the contrary lies in his throat, and is a foul-spoken, villanous slanderer."

Here the enthusiastic and somewhat incoherent speaker was abruptly interrupted by Maitland of Lethington, who, rising to his feet, and resting his hands on the low table around which Chastelâr's judges were, said, looking at the prisoner—

"Friend, ye must speak to your defence, if ye would speak at all. This that ye have said is nothing to the purpose, and ye cannot be permitted to take up the time of this court with such rhapsodies as these, that make not for any point in your accusation.—Think ye not so, my lords?" he added, glancing round the table. Several nods of assent spoke acquiescence. When Maitland had concluded—

"I have done then, my lords," said Chastelâr, bowing and seating himself. "I have no more to say."

A short consultation now took place amongst the prisoner's judges, when sentence of death was unanimously agreed to, and he was ordered to be beheaded on the following day, the 22nd of February, 1563.

On the rising of the court, the Earl of Moray repaired to the queen, and informed her of the doom awarded against Chastelâr. Mary was greatly affected by this intelligence. She burst into tears, exclaiming—

“O unhappy, thrice unhappy countenance! thou hast been given me for a curse instead of a blessing—the ruin of those who love me best—that, by inspiring a silly passion, at once worthless and dangerous, will not permit one to remain near me in the character of a friend. My lord, my lord,” she continued, in great agitation, “can ye not, will ye not save the unhappy young man? I beseech thee, I implore thee, by the ties of consanguinity that connect us, by the duty ye owe to me as thy sovereign, to spare his life.”

“Ye know not what ye ask, madam,” replied Moray, stalking up and down the apartment. “How can his life be spared consistently with your honour? Save him, and ye will set a thousand slanderous tongues a wagging. It may not—must not be.”

Mary herself could not deny the force of this remark, and finding she had nothing to oppose to it, she flung herself into a chair, and again burst into tears. In this condition the earl left her to give orders respecting the execution of Chastelâr on the morrow, and to put another proceeding in train for obtaining that result which he had aimed at on the trial of the unfortunate young man. Sending again for Villemont—

“Friend,” he said, on that person entering the apartment, “I wish another small piece of service at your hands.”

Villemont bowed, and expressed his readiness to do anything he might be required to do. The earl carelessly nodded approbation.

“To night, then, Villemont,” he went on, “you will repair to the dungeon in which Chastelâr is confined. You will see him as a friend. You understand me?”

“Well, my lord—very well.”

“Just so. Then you will hint to him that you have reason to believe he might yet save his life by confessing a

participation in his guilt on the part of the queen. You may add—though not as from me, of course—that I have no doubt of his having been encouraged to those liberties for which his life is forfeited; and you may say that you know I feel for him, and would readily procure his pardon if he would only give me a reasonable ground or pretext for doing so, by showing that there were *others* equally in fault with him. Do you entirely understand me, Villemont?"

"Entirely, my lord," replied the latter.

"So, then; return to me when you have seen Chastelâr, and let me know the result," said the earl.

Villemont once more withdrew, to perform the treacherous and knavish part assigned him. About midnight he sought the dungeon of the unhappy gentleman, and having been admitted by the guards, found him busily employed in writing; the indulgence of a lamp, with writing materials, having, at his most earnest request, been afforded him. Indeed, these were more willingly and readily given than he was aware of. They were granted in the hope that he would commit something to writing which, without his intending it, might compromise the character of the queen. But in this her enemies were disappointed.

On Villemont entering Chastelâr's dungeon, the latter, as we have already said, was busily engaged in writing. He was inditing a last farewell to the queen in verse. On this employment he was so intent that he did not observe, or, at least, pay any attention to the entrance of Villemont, but continued writing on till he had completed his task, which now, however, occupied only a very few minutes. On finishing—

"'Tis done," he said, and threw down his pen with violence on the table. "These are the last notes of the harp of Chastelâr.—Ha, Villemont!" and only now for the first time seeming conscious of that person's presence, "I am glad to see you, my countryman. This is kind. I thought there were none in this strange land to care for me. But they shall see, Villemont," he added, proudly, "how a Frenchman and a poet can die. That is, boldly and bravely. He were

no true poet whose soul was not elevated above the fear of death. "I said, my friend," he went on, after a momentary pause, and sighing deeply as he spoke, "that I thought there were none in this land to care for me or to sorrow for me, and perhaps it is so. But there is one, Villemont, whom I would not willingly believe indifferent to my fate. She, surely, much as I have offended her, will say, 'Poor Chastelâr!' Nay, methinks I see a tear standing in that peerless eye when she recalls the memory of her departed poet. That, that, Villemont," said the unhappy captive, with an enthusiasm which the near approach of death had not been able to abate—"that would be something worth dying for!"

Villemont smiled.

"You hold your life lightly indeed, Chastelâr," he said, speaking in his native language, "if you think its loss compensated by a woman's tear."

"Ah, Villemont, but such a woman!" exclaimed Chastelâr.

"Well, well," replied the former, again smiling, "but you can have no doubt that *she*, at least, will regret your death. *She* loved you too well not to deplore your fate."

"Did she?" exclaimed Chastelâr, eagerly, and with such a look of inquiry and doubt as greatly disappointed the asserter. "You know whom I mean, then, but how know ye that which ye have just now said? Assure me that ye speak true, Villemont, and I shall die happy."

"Ah! bah! you know it yourself, my friend, better than I," replied the latter. "No use in concealing it now," he added, with an intelligent look.

"Concealing what, sir?" said Chastelâr, in a tone of mingled surprise and displeasure.

"Why, the affection the queen entertained for you," replied Villemont. "We all know, my friend, you would not have done what you did had she not encouraged your addresses. And I'll tell you what, Chastelâr," he went on—"I have reason to believe that your life might be yet spared, if you would only show that this was so."

"Ah, I understand you," said Chastelâr, with suppressed passion. "If I will accuse the queen, if I will put her in the power of her enemies, her enemies will be obliged to me. In other words, I may save my life by sacrificing her reputation; and it would be little matter whether what I said should be true or not. Is it not so, Villemont?" Then, without waiting for an answer, "Villain, devil that thou art," he exclaimed, now suddenly giving full swing to the passion that had been raised within him, "how hast thou dared to come to me with such an infamous proposal as this? Begone, begone, ruffian, I say!" and he seized the now trembling caitiff by the throat, and dashed him against the door of the cell, with a violence that instantly brought in the guards who were stationed outside. These, seeing how matters stood, hurried Villemont out of the dungeon, and again secured the door on its unfortunate inmate.

On leaving Chastelâr, Villemont repaired to the Earl of Moray, but with infinitely less confidence in his look and manner than on the former occasion, when his villany had been successful. To the earl he detailed the particulars of his interview with Chastelâr, not forgetting to mention the rough treatment he had received from the infuriated poet.

"Then he'll confess nothing, Villemont?" said Moray, when the former had done speaking.

"Nothing, my lord. He values not his life at a pin's fee."

"Obstinate fool!" exclaimed the earl, evidently chagrined and disappointed. "Let him die, then. You may retire, Villemont," he abruptly added.

Villemont obeyed.

"His execution, at any rate, shall be public," said the earl to himself, when the latter had left him. "Perhaps he may make some confession on the scaffold, and it will be well to have it amply testified."

Mary Stuart, who, later in life, on occasions when her affections were engaged, commonly showed herself so rash in dealing with public opinion, was timid and hesitating in this instance. She was, in fact, terrified at the calumnies spread,

and even openly preached against her in the churches by the reformers, and yielded up to their rancour, therefore, that devoted head as a proof of her own virtue, and resisted every prayer addressed to her for pardon. Having returned to Holyrood, she refused to commute the sentence of death pronounced against Chastelâr by his fanatical judges, and commanded the following couplet, inscribed by an unknown hand on the wall of her chamber, to be effaced —

Sur front de roy
Que pardon soit

Chastelâr had a friend, however, in Erskine, a cousin of the captain of the queen's guard at St Andrews. This generous gentleman having obtained access to the prison of the condemned poet, insinuated himself into the good graces of his gaoler, and tried to make him drunk, with a hope of effecting Chastelâr's escape. But the custodian, a rigid Presbyterian, baffled every attempt to lull his vigilance asleep, and night and day narrowly watched his prisoner until he delivered him into the hands of the executioner.

Some writers seem to think that the queen was not ignorant of this attempt at procuring Chastelâr's escape. The relationship of Erskine with the captain of the guard is, in absence of proof, a point in Mary's favour.

During his serious moods, when his features lost their wonted frivolous expression, Chastelâr bore a striking resemblance to the Chevalier Bayard. On quitting his dungeon for the scaffold, he recalled to many the appearance of his chivalrous uncle—alike in face, figure, and intrepid bearing. "If I am not like my ancestor, 'without reproach,' " said he, "I am at least like him, 'without fear' "

He ascended the scaffold with the same intrepid step as though he were marching to meet the enemy, and his gentle manlike appearance and noble bearing excited strongly the sympathy of the crowd. Whilst the executioner was occupied with the last preparations, Chastelâr took a small volume from his pocket, opened it, and read aloud, with great dignity and composure, his friend Ronsard's "Hymn to Death," in

which occur the following lines, adapted at once to his situation and his sentiments :—

“ Le désir n’est rien que martire,
Content ne vit le désireux,
Et l’homme mort est bien heureux,
Heureux qui plus rien ne désire.”

When he had done, he turned towards that part of the castle of St. Andrews where he supposed the queen to be, and kissing his hand, waved a graceful adieu, exclaiming, “ Farewell, loveliest and most cruel princess whom the world contains !”

Having uttered these words—the last he spoke on earth—he laid his head with the utmost composure on the block. The axe of the executioner fell, and the high-souled, accomplished, but too enthusiastic Chastelâr was no more.



CHAPTER VIII.

HENRY THE GREAT AND THE FAIR GABRIELLE.

I.

HENRY IV. AND THE FAIR GABRIELLE.

IT was at a period of fierce intestine struggle and heroic suffering in France that a tender sentiment for the *Fair Gabrielle* had its birth in the bosom of Henry of Navarre. This celebrated beauty was the daughter of Antoine, Marquis d'Estrées, grandmaster of the artillery—a brave soldier, distinguished for his noble defence of Noyon against the Duke of Mayenne—and Françoise de la Bourdaisière. Both the marquis and his father had been attached to the cause of the King of Navarre, as adherents of that mixed party, half Huguenot, half Catholic, who hoped in the end to secure the crown to Henry of Bearn.

The largest topic in the scandalous chronicles of those times relates to the ladies who were successively degraded—or *advanced*, according to the court language of the day—to the post of Royal Favourite. What the licentious monarch took no pains to conceal,—what was paraded almost ostentatiously before the public eye,—the writer needs not pass by as a forbidden subject, and must not attempt to palliate by the excuse of common infirmity or special temptation.

We leave out of account the less notorious persons who were the favourites of the hour; but two have attained his-

torical fame—Gabrielle d'Estrées, and Henriette d'Entragues, and our sketches would be incomplete without some account of hopes, intrigues, and disappointments, which became matters of state concern, and which figure largely in the unreserved communications of Henry of Bourbon's great friend and minister, Sully.

It was when the din of arms was loudest that the susceptible Henry became captivated by the grace and beauty of Gabrielle. The brave king had been for three weeks in the saddle without putting off his armour, hotly pursuing the Duke of Parma's retreating force, when chance led him to Cœuvres. In the chateau of Cœuvres, near Soissons, the birthplace of Mademoiselle d'Estrées, the victor of Ivry first beheld her when a lovely girl of eighteen, towards the close of 1590. Chateau life in those days was confined to a daily round of simple occupation and amusement, with scarcely any intercourse with town or city. Gabrielle rode a high-bred palfrey by her father's side in the hunting-field, and he had taught her to shoot with the arquebuse, and apply the lighted match to the roaring culverin, in order to strengthen her nerves and bring her up as a soldier's daughter. No wonder, then, that she already evinced a singular courage and firmness of character. In early girlhood Gabrielle had formed a warm attachment to the Duke of Bellegarde, that brave young captain of light cavalry who rose to the rank of Marshal of France; so lofty in bearing, so noble in feature, and of manners so graceful, that few women could resist the fascination of his dark eye. When Bellegarde was exiled in Poland, and afterwards in Piedmont during the civil war, he left a profound impression on the youthful heart of Gabrielle, and the Prince of Bearn came after him to dispute possession of that which he found less ambitious of a brilliant destiny than of a chivalrous and lasting affection.

Henry of Bearn was then in his thirty-third year, the age of maturity and strength; but such had been the vicissitudes of his life, his hardships and disappointments, the wear and tear of war and dissipation, that his face was

already deeply ploughed with wrinkles, and his naturally bronzed complexion had become of almost as dark a hue as that peculiar to the elderly Basques. In the last campaign he had undergone such deep anxiety that his hair and beard had grown streaked with grey. But Henry, despite this war-worn and unattractive exterior, was still the most brilliant cavalier of France. Courageous by nature, first in the assault and last in the retreat, ever ready to draw his sword for his country's right, his spirit and resolution never failed him under the most trying reverse. *A cœur vaillant rien d'impossible* was the motto taught him by his heroic mother, and he not only ever bore it in mind, but acted up to it. Such a character exercises a potent influence over most female minds, and Gabrielle, although pledged to the Duke de Bellegarde by an exchange of rings, if not of hearts, could not behold without admiration the gay and gallant bearing of the prince whose "white plume" had so lately braved the hottest fire of the enemy at Ivry, when—

A thousand spurs were striking deep a thousand spears in rest
A thousand knights were pressing close behind the snow white crest,
And in they burst and on they rushed while like a guiding star,
Amidst the thickest carnage blazed the helmet of Navarre

Thus, as that same victory—one of the most complete and glorious on record—raised the fame of Henry of Bourbon to the highest pitch, and he was celebrated on all sides as a hero, it is not surprising that the image of Bellegarde was somewhat eclipsed, though in no wise obliterated, by the dazzling career of his royal master. The first interview between the king and Mademoiselle d'Estrees was on the evening of a day of a hard fought battle, when, as we have said, Henry chanced to seek a night's repose in the chateau of Cœuvres, and smitten with the grace and beauty of the youthful chatelaine whilst dispensing her father's hospitalities, from that moment Henry became the assiduous guest of the marquis whenever war and state affairs permitted, and his buoyant gaiety and merry wit soon converted him into a hopeful lover.

Dreux de Radier draws a most captivating portrait of the

"charming Gabrielle" at this time. He affirms that she was then indisputably the loveliest woman in France, with hair of a beautiful *blonde cendrée*, eyes blue and full of fire, and a complexion as fair as alabaster; her nose well shaped and aquiline, a mouth showing a set of pearly teeth, with lips whereon the god of love had set his seal; a swan-like throat and perfectly formed bust; a taper hand; in short, says he, she had the demeanour of a goddess, and, exclaims an old rhyming chronicler,—

"Heureux qui baiser peut sa bouche cenabrine
Ses lèvres de corail, sa denture ivoirine!" *

The conferences of Noisy prevented the king for a while from strengthening the impression he hoped he had made upon the heart of Mademoiselle d'Estrées. But, as he had shown in his previous amour with *la belle Corisande* de Guiche, Henry testified a lively anxiety to interest Gabrielle in his political affairs. By letters (which still exist), he not only dwelt on his affection, but informed her of every incident of moment which occurred during the perilous campaign in Rouerque and Languedoc. The earliest letters of Henry to Gabrielle d'Estrées are marked by this double character—a loving familiarity, a lofty freedom of expression, combined with a lively, gallant, and impassioned spirit. "If I should be conquered, you know me too well to believe that I shall run away. No! my last thought shall be given to heaven, and the last but one to you."

In the autumn of that year, Henry having sought a brief period of repose, after the daily fatigue and turmoil of the war, at Senlis, sent a command to the Marquis de Cœuvres to repair thither with his daughter, ostensibly that M. d'Estrées might take the oaths as a privy councillor, and his seat at the council board. It was with ill-concealed anger that Gabrielle obeyed the royal mandate, knowing that the visit would subject her to the renewed attentions of the king; and as, doubtless, they would be paid more openly than ever, she foresaw that such publicity would prove the destruction

* *Sable, Muse Chasseresse.*

both of her fair fame and matrimonial prospects with the man of her choice. It may be conceived, therefore, that Mademoiselle d'Estrées went in no very placable mood to Senlis. Her conduct there, however, was marked by the strictest propriety. Gabrielle refused to meet his majesty in private, declined his presents, and studiously sought every opportunity of showing that she considered herself betrothed to Bellegarde. That gallant person, either dreading the wrath of his amorous sovereign, or perhaps piqued at the favourable manner in which the homage of M de Longueville (another suitor for the hand of the fair Gabrielle) had been received by his fascinating mistress, first hesitated, and then gradually abated the ardour of his suit. Gabrielle, highly incensed at such a change in Bellegarde, took the next occasion of the king pressing her to accept some favour at his hands to entreat him to hasten her marriage with the recalcitrant duke. This rather cool request brought matters to a head, the king summoned Bellegarde before him, and brusquely said, "M de Bellegarde! neither in war, politics, nor love will I tolerate a rival. You are aware of my admiration for Mademoiselle d'Estrées. I command you, therefore, to relinquish her hand. Heed my words!" The duke became at once aware, both by the expression of his master's face and the angry tone in which he had addressed him, that there was nothing left but to obey. He bowed low and asked Henry's permission to quit Senlis forthwith.

When Mademoiselle d'Estrées learned the result of the interview, she is recorded to have given way to a paroxysm of rage and tears, and bitterly lamented having attracted the dangerous attentions of the king. M d'Estrées' urgent, yet respectful remonstrances to Henry against depriving his house of so honourable an alliance were disregarded, the royal rival steadily refused to recall the banished Bellegarde. Henry signified his wish, however, to do his utmost to console Mademoiselle d'Estrées, but when he sought her during that same afternoon, for the purpose of allaying her grief and anger, he seems to have met with rather a stormy reception. "Sire," sobbed she, "it is useless, I will not

listen to you. You exercise a cruel tyranny! You seek the ruin of my reputation, and of my worldly fortunes. M. de Bellegarde offered me honourable marriage." And adding much more, with tears and supplications, she threw herself at Henry's feet, in hope of obtaining Bellegarde's recall. All was of no avail; and finding the king inflexible, she rose and angrily withdrew from the presence. That same night also Gabrielle quitted Senlis for Cœuvres, and left wholly unnoticed the peremptory missives sent to bring her back, both by Henry and her father. The capture of Corbeil by the Duke of Parma happened just then, luckily, to distract the infatuated king from this love-chase, and summon him once more to devote himself to the sterner pursuits of war.

Henry's amours at this time were only brief episodes in his adventurous life. The halcyon days of peace could not be looked for amidst such deadly animosities, nor until the parties in arms against each other became thoroughly exhausted. It was long ere France, bleeding from a hundred wounds, found a season of refreshment and repose. But the zest of those intervals devoted to the tender passion, which Henry occasionally snatched amid the din of war, was, doubtless, enhanced by the danger incurred to obtain them. He seemed to regard them as his recompense for the perils and privations of the campaign. The romantic interest which attaches to his career at this period is well illustrated by an adventurous visit to Cœuvres to see *the Fair Gabrielle*, who, since her abrupt departure from Senlis, had vouched no reply to his letters. The resistance offered by Mademoiselle d'Estrées only served to inflame the passion of the king. He was equally distracted by her coldness as by her absence, and also by the fear lest Bellegarde should, by some desperate means, effect the rescue of his betrothed. Henry determined, therefore, to offer Gabrielle some signal mark of his devotion, in the hope of making his peace with the offended beauty. The chateau of Cœuvres was some twenty-four miles from La Fère, the king's head-quarters. There was a great wood to traverse, and he would have to pass in

sight of two garrisons of the League To set out accompanied by an escort would be to proclaim his passion publicly, and vex the object of it more than ever To go alone would be risking too much, for the country was alive with the enemy's troops The king, rather stimulated than dismayed by the difficulties attending the attempt, sought counsel amongst the most intimate of his nobles, who one and all dissuaded him earnestly from entertaining such a desperate design Henry, however, was not to be turned from his resolution, but, choosing a small band from amongst the youngest and boldest of his noble companions — Givry, Biron, Rosny, and others — quitted La Fere secretly before dawn, and took the road to Cœuvres Biron was sent forward to apprise Mademoiselle d'Estrees of the approaching visit of his royal master At a small town about nine miles from Cœuvres the king dismissed his attendants, and, having assumed the dress of a peasant, went alone and on foot the rest of the way, carrying a sack filled with straw on his head Henry did not stick at trifles in order to attain his object, whether in love or war As Hercules had condescended to exchange the sword for the distaff, and spin to please Omphale, so he, with the same end in view, substituted the peasant's jerkin for the knightly cuirass, and replaced his white plumed helmet by the sack filled with straw

This masquerading enterprise did not succeed, however, so well as Henry could have wished The chateau of Cœuvres, unfortified, stood on the edge of a thick wood, and was protected from the assaults of the neighbouring garrison by an order from the Duke of Mayenne, under whom the Marquis de Cœuvres had once served It was arranged that the king should pass through this wood, as, by its shelter, he would avoid the risk of encountering any of the forage parties of the enemy who scoured the highways Ere emerging from the friendly covert, Henry was met by Biron, who informed him that Mademoiselle d'Estrees was prepared for his reception, and would meet him at a certain balcony in the chateau, accessible from the garden, and thither

Biron conducted the amorous masquerader. Leaving Biron in charge of his sack of straw, the king proceeded alone to the interview. He found Gabrielle in company with her married sister, Madame de Villars, who, warmly favouring Bellegarde's pretensions to her fair sister's hand, strongly persuaded Gabrielle to discourage the overtures of the king. The reception of the royal suitor was chilling in the extreme—almost disrespectful. Mademoiselle d'Estrées could indeed scarcely refrain from laughing in the king's face, so grotesque was the figure he cut in his rustic attire—a disguise neither fitting his proportions nor his dignity. Instead, therefore, of remembering the risk he had run to obtain the interview, and expressing her sense of it in words of gracious compliment, Gabrielle received Henry's courtesies at first with steady coldness and disdain. She abruptly quitted the gallery, we are told, leaving the king and Madame de Villars together, with the cutting sentence, "that she had nothing to say or discuss with his majesty, who looked so abominably ugly in his present garments that he had better go and change them, for she could not really bear to look at him." She had the civility, however, to return in the course of about ten minutes and offer the king some refreshment. The good-natured Bearnois, who took everything easily and facetiously, kissed the fair hand which presented the cup of wine, and having drunk it, in pledge of happier hours to come, took leave of the sisters, saying gaily to Madame de Villars, "I have good heart, after this interview, that nothing will go wrong with me, but all things prosper. I am going to pursue the enemy, and in a day or two *ma belle* will hear what gallant exploits I have accomplished for love of her." The amorous king regained his head-quarters in safety, burning like a paladin of old to do some deed of arms the fame of which would enable him successfully to carry the heart of his lady-love by assault.

At this juncture, the chronicles relate that Henry himself arranged a marriage between Gabrielle and a compliant gentleman named Liancourt, who, they affirm, basely lent himself to this compact under the condition of never

exercising his marital rights—a transaction too shameful to be credible. The same tale has been told of several princes, with the view to derogate from the honourable character of the loves of the olden time. It is, we think, more reasonable to believe that this marriage was hastily made by the Marquis d'Estrees himself in order to avoid the scandal which threatened to dishonour his house through the too frequent visits of Henry of Bearn. How incredible such disgraceful compliance on the part of a well born gentleman, merely for the sake of satisfying his motives of ambition! As at that time, be it remembered, Henry was neither rich nor powerful enough to command such despicable condescension, rather let us believe that the brave and stern old soldier hastened to marry his daughter so soon as he saw that the assiduities of the king were unmistakable. Far more reasonable is it to suppose that the anxious foresight of a parent prompted the marriage, than vile complaisance on the part of a worthy and chivalrous soldier like Liancourt.

The Baron de Liancourt was considerably older than Mademoiselle d'Estrées, and a widower with nine children, but his descent was illustrious, and his wealth great. He was, however, illiterate, feeble in mind, and repulsive in person. A solution of this kind, to free her from the king's attentions, Gabrielle had not calculated upon. She had lost every hope of being united to her lover Bellegarde, who had abandoned her to her fate, and she beheld herself on the eve of compulsory marriage with a man whom she despised. Under these circumstances the honour and resolution of Mademoiselle d'Estrees succumbed. From thenceforth Gabrielle yielded to the force of circumstances. The blandishments of her royal adorer, together with the insidious counsels of her aunt, Madame de Sourdis, vanquished her lingering reluctance. This aunt was a clever, unscrupulous, and worldly minded woman, who thought that, if obeyed with docility, she could guide such a pupil as her lovely niece to the summit of the loftiest ambition. It happened that the Chancellor de Cheverney was the lover of Madame de Sourdis, so that he also brought his ripe experience of

courts, his finesse and potent authority, to the service of Gabrielle. How, then, could she hope to prevail against so many auxiliaries thus combined to forward the wishes of a most resolute, though good-natured king? Henry had pledged his word that he would cause her to be carried off to a place of safety immediately after the celebration of her espousals. She consented, therefore, though reluctantly, to the project. The nuptial day passed, however, and no token indicated that the king was about to fulfil his promise. An unexpected opportunity for the surprisal and seizure of Paris having offered, Henry hesitated not a moment between love and duty. He went off to join his troops for an attack upon the capital. The ruse, however, by which an entry into Paris was hoped to be gained having failed, Henry thereupon returned to Senlis, and afterwards went to Chaunay. Thence the impatient king despatched a mandate, commanding Monsieur de Liancourt to join the camp, and to bring his wife with him. Not a day of grace was allowed: even the very hour when he was to enter the royal presence is said to have been indicated in the missive. The tears and threats of his reluctant bride, and her unconcealed aversion and contempt, had rendered the few days which De Liancourt passed in her society the very opposite to those of a *lune de miel*. He therefore yielded obedience to the mandate which he dared not dispute, and repaired to Chaunay. "Perhaps," says Dreux de Radier, "he thought that future fortune would recompense him for the wrongs done to his affections, but he was not better treated in the one than in the other. The king left the unfortunate husband in the lurch." On the following day, in fact, a royal order exiled M. de Liancourt from court, and directed him to take up his abode at a castle which belonged to him in Limousin, to which he departed without being permitted even a farewell interview with his bride. Thenceforth Gabrielle reigned supreme over the court of Henry IV., who daily seemed more and more fascinated with her charms. She was attended by Madame de Sourdis, and by her cousin, Mademoiselle de Bourdaisière; and the cunning aunt so initiated the niece in the arts requisite to maintain herself

in the royal favour, that from the period of her instalment at court no other lady presumed to dispute her empire

Henry now fully made up his mind to the important measure—"the perilous leap," as he expressed it to Gabrielle—the recantation of his Protestantism, which he saw to be alike indispensably necessary to the peaceable recognition of his rights, as to the advancement of a marriage with his lovely mistress—a desire which seems to have possessed him with increasing force soon after she was recognised publicly as the Royal Favourite. The bond which united him to Margaret de Valois could alone be severed by pontifical fiat, and the chief obstacle to obtaining it was Henry's heresy. Gabrielle was a good Catholic, even, therefore, if Queen Marguerite's repudiation were effected, the necessary dispensation for his marriage with Madame de Liancourt would still be withheld by Rome. Gabrielle's persuasion, coupled with his own infatuation for her, therefore soon overcame the few scruples of conscience which remained in Henry's breast. When the king declared his resolution to recant, Madame de Liancourt, elate beyond measure, ordered a solemn service of thanksgiving to be performed in her private chapel, which the noblest ladies in Mantes attended. The sycophants of the court—

The swarm that in the noontide beam were born —

now likened the favourite to the saintly Clotilde, and compared Gabrielle's influence over the king to that wielded by that famous princess over her husband Clovis, whom she converted to Christianity.

Ladies of the highest rank now paid their homage to the victorious Henry, with a view of figuring in the halls of the Louvre, and among the rest the Duchess de Nevers, whose cousinship to the king promised a brilliant position at the future court. The duchess immediately visited Gabrielle, and the most intimate relations sprung up between these two influential persons. The Duchesses of Rohan and Longueville, and Madame de Guercheville joined the court, and Madame de Noirmoutier also presented herself, radiant

with those charms which had wrought so much mischief during the reign of Henry III. Surrounded by these noble dames, it was the pleasure of the king that Gabrielle should hold great state and reserve; and, even in his presence, he had her seated in a chair of state, beside which his majesty often stood, cap in hand. About this time Madame de Liancourt was reconciled to her father, who, in assumed indignation at her position relative to the king, had refused to see his daughter. This displeasure, however, had not prevented the Marquis d'Estrées from accepting notable benefits from the generosity of his sovereign.

These festivities in the quaint old Norman town of Mantes were interrupted by the king's departure for his camp before Dreux. During his sojourn there, Henry failed not to inform his mistress of the progress of the siege. He gallantly sends her a magnificent bouquet of orange-flowers by a special envoy, and desires Gabrielle to set out to join his sister at Anet, "where, madame," he writes, "I shall have the happiness of seeing you every day." He next sends Gabrielle tidings of a victory in Dauphiny, desiring her to impart the intelligence to his sister:—"You will tell my sister the news, and say that I kiss her hand a thousand times, and your feet a million."

Victory after victory now proclaimed that ere long the supreme fortune of Henry IV. would seat him securely on the throne of his ancestors. In July, 1593, Henry, on repairing to St. Denis to attend a theological conference, was saluted by the Parisians with repeated cries of "Vive le Roi!" The following morning the conference was to commence at the early hour of six o'clock. His majesty rose at dawn, and wrote his celebrated letter to Gabrielle d'Estrées before his interview with the prelates. Gabrielle was detained in Chartres by her father. Henry, it will be seen, writes to his mistress with singular levity, jesting on the eve of his solemn renunciation of Protestantism, and impressing one with the idea some months previously expressed by his court-fool, Chicot, who exclaimed, "*Ah, M. mon ami*, I will wager that you would gladly consign both Papist and Hu-

guenot to the satellites of Satan, provided you could thereby become the anointed King of France!"

"King Henry IV to Gabrielle d Estrees

"I arrived here last night early, and was importuned by God feirers [*Dieu garde*] until bedtime It is believed that the truce will be signed to day, but in matters which regard the League, I profess myself of the Order of St Thomas Besides those persons whom I notified to you yesterday that I had chosen for your escort here, I have despatched fifty arquebusiers who equal many cuirasses The hope which I entertain of seeing you to morrow restrains my pen from inditing a long epistle On Sunday I am to take the perilous leap [*le sault perilleux*] At this moment while I am writing I have a hundred unfortunate distractions which will make me hate St Denis as you dislike Mantes Good bye my heart arrive early to-morrow morning as it seems a year since I saw you I kiss a million of times your beautiful hands.— This 23rd day of July [1593]"

Henry spent the Christmas festival of 1593 at Mantes The halo of victory encircled the king The improvement in his revenue now showed that Henry could also spend royally, and take full revel in pleasure During his sojourn at Mantes, he took the first necessary step in the design entertained by his majesty of elevating Madame de Liancourt to the throne Gabrielle had borne children to Henry, who were ennobled with her-self This was not enough Henry wanted an heir, a direct succession of the crown was all important, Marguerite was virtually divorced, and the king hoped that, with a little management, he might get the marriage annulled by the Pope, make Gabrielle the legal partner of his throne, and turn her bastard son into the Dauphin of France His plans, however, were disconcerted by an unexpected obstacle, Marguerite was quite willing to be divorced from a husband whom she never loved, but would not make way for Gabrielle The daughter, wife, and sister of kings, degraded as she was, had some regard for the dignity of the crown, and she would not by her own act open the door of the palace to the mistress of her husband At this the ancestral pride of Marguerite revolted Moreover, as she herself remarked, "she could not descry or acknowledge the moral superiority of Madame de Liancourt," and therefore thought that if she was required to yield her rights à *cette décriée bagasse*, she had better herself wear the crown of the *fleur de lis* From thenceforth the queen

resorted to endless delays and excuses to retard the despatch of the necessary procurations. Pope Clement also showed himself hostile and inflexible in his resolve not to absolve the king.

When Henry at last made his solemn entry into Paris in 1594, "Madame de Liancourt," says L'Etoile, "was borne a little after him in a splendid open litter, so studded with pearls and glittering gems that their lustre eclipsed the glare of the flambeaux. She was attired in a black satin robe, all slashed and puffed with white." Gabrielle was therefore even then, it seems, invested with almost regal honours. In the following spring she exchanged the name of Liancourt for the title of Marchioness de Monceaux, and with it received the rich manors thereunto appertaining; and to these the king added the palatial Hôtel Schomberg at Paris, wherein she was installed with all luxury and magnificence. Henry went almost every week to visit her at her charming retreat at Monceaux, and more than one of his "ordonnances" are dated from that chateau of his mistress. At this residence, also, were written the letters-patent, July, 1597, creating her Duchess de Beaufort, with a revenue of forty thousand livres; and, some few days after, other letters-patent granted the ducal peerage to Cæsar *Monsieur*, as the eldest of the sons of Gabrielle d'Estrées was usually called. For this boy Henry evinced the tenderest affection—one of those blind and irrational predilections frequently seen in men of otherwise robust mind. His pretty, infantile manners, his very caprices, were enchanting in the eyes of the rough soldier-king. He doated on the boy's bold and open face, drew himself the horoscope of the cherished being whom he destined to mount the throne, in spite of the openly expressed opinion of the gravest jurists and most sincere among his State councillors, "that natural children, although legitimated, could not succeed to the crown." Some of these personages expressed themselves in very plain, not to say offensive, terms on the subject to the enemies of Gabrielle d'Estrées. The Parisians, indeed, beheld with no little astonishment the title and honours of a dauphin of France conferred on the son of a mistress, and that

ennobled favourite, eclipsing, in the newly established court of the Louvre, the sister of their sovereign in beauty and magnificence. Of this, L'Etoile gives us an amusing instance. One day a Genevan printer, having business which took him to the public offices, then situate in a court of the Louvre, found a large crowd assembled before the grand entrance, waiting, as he supposed, to see the king come forth. In a short time a stir took place at the portal, and the royal guards presented arms as a lady, splendidly attired, issued forth, preceded and followed by a train of pages and gentlemen, who conducted her to an equipage bearing the king's badge and cipher. Struck with the beauty of the lady, and the vivid curiosity she excited amongst the bystanders, the printer inquired of an arquebusier on duty whether Queen Marguerite had again returned to her husband, and taken up her former quarters in the palace. "My friend," said the soldier, with a grin, heartily amused at seeing the rustic querist standing bare headed like the rest, "do not risk catching a cold, put on your cap. The fine lady you have just seen is only a queen in her own esteem. She is the king's mistress."

During the festivities which inaugurated the reconciliation of Henry and the young Duke of Guise, Madame de Beaufort quitted the Hôtel Schomberg for the Louvre—another progress towards the throne she coveted. The dignity of a queen was now openly assigned to Gabrielle, no person below the rank of the king's sister was admitted to her presence without having first made formal application for an interview, and every one having audience of the king passed from the royal cabinet to pay homage to the duchess. In the receptions at the Louvre she occupied a *fauteuil* next to that of the king, and never rose to return the salutations even of princesses of the blood. Chamberlains preceded her when she entered or quitted the royal saloon, and the challenge, "*Place ! place pour Madame la Duchesse !*" was raised in the ear of majesty. The *levées* of the duchess were now ceremoniously attended, and the greatest ladies contended for the honour of handing her prayer book, rings, fan, or

handkerchief. "Certes," says a contemporary, "no one can gaze without vivid admiration on the lovely duchess, and on her beautiful children. The king, our sire, cannot keep his eyes from contemplation, for the name of Gabrielle d'Estrées will remain ever on record as the synonym of 'perfect beauty.'"

II.

SUDDEN AND MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF THE FAIR GABRIELLE.

IN 1596, whilst the Parisians were suffering bitter privations, famine and pestilence carrying them off by thousands, Henry, instead of adopting measures to ameliorate their condition, seems to have been occupied solely with his love for the *Fair Gabrielle*. He made her accompany him everywhere with a scandalous perseverance, not only on his parties of pleasure, diversions at Fontainebleau and St. Germain, but even when engaged with business so serious as the opening of Parliament. She accompanied him on one occasion to Rouen for that purpose. Here we have revealed to us the character both of Henry IV. and Gabrielle. The ascendancy of the royal favourite appears in everything and everywhere, and their mutual love was paraded ostentatiously before the eyes of the astonished Parisians. They were often seen together on horseback, Gabrielle dressed like a man, all in green, and Henry in a *juste-au-corps* of pearl grey, "their two steeds so close alongside each other that they could hold hands; and thus they cantered along."

Early next year the serenity of those days of dalliance was rudely disturbed by the bad news which suddenly broke upon Paris, that Amiens had been captured by the Spaniards, and that already the vanguard of the *regimentos* had pushed on as far as Creil and Chantilly. Henry was in consternation, but quickly recovering himself, exclaimed, "My friends, I have long enough played the King of France; it is high

time for me to ply the King of Navarre" Could he, too, he asked himself, as King of France, see the enemy penetrate to the very centre of his realm, whilst passing his days in dalliance, or coursing hares at Fontainebleau? Could he feast on dainties, and drink the wines of Jurançon and Arbois till nightfall at Zamet's, or lounge through the fair at St Germain's with his little son Cæsar, merely for the sake of buying the boy a silver bon-bon box, or of flinging away 800 crowns in the purchase of some costly bagatelle? To the honour of Henry, a feeling of patriotic glory aroused him to nobler things, and he thus addressed the weeping and dishevelled Gabrielle "*Ma maîtresse*, a truce to pleasure, we must get on horseback and wage another war!" He instantly set out with Biron, at the head of five thousand men, for Amiens, and on his departure the well-known song, which afterwards became so popular, was composed —

"Charmante Gabrielle
Percée par mille dards
Quand la gloire m'appelle
A la suite de Mars &c

The recapture of Amiens was the last operation of the war, and Henry, after the treaty of Vervins had been signed, hastened back, as usual, to lay his trophies at the feet of Gabrielle

All this homage to the reigning favourite could not be given, it may be supposed, without the drawback of heart-burning envy on the part of the courtiers, and murmurs on that of the commonalty. One day, when Henry was returning from paying Gabrielle a brief visit at St Germain, an amusing incident happened, which opened the king's eyes somewhat clearly to the effects of his preposterous favouritism. Henry had to cross the Seine at the ferry opposite to the Quai Malaquais, to reach the Louvre, and being simply attired, and accompanied by only two gentlemen, the boatman did not recognise him. The king, with his wonted jocularity, accosted the ferryman by asking him what he thought of the Peace of Vervins. "*Ma foi !*" replied the boatman, "I don't understand the good of this fine peace. There are

the same taxes on everything—even this wretched boat is taxed; I have enough to do to eke out a livelihood.” “But the king means soon to diminish these taxes,” said Henry. “The king is a good man enough; but he has got a mistress who wears so many fine gowns and gauds, that there is no end to her expense, and we pay for it all! Even if she belonged to his majesty alone, that might be some consolation; but report tells strange stories of this same lady!” The king laughed, and stepping from the boat, went off without paying his toll. Upon this the man pursued the party, and clamorously demanded his *sou*, using expletives which seemed to afford still greater amusement to the king. At length some passer by, a spectator of the scene, seized the ferryman by the collar, and pronounced the name of the fare whom he was abusing so lustily. The effect was instantaneous. The man, believing that his life would be the forfeit of his temerity, dropped down, and was carried back to his boat in a swoon. For a few days he heard nothing of the incident; meantime the Duchess de Beaufort arrived in Paris, when the king caused the man to be arrested and conveyed to the Louvre. There he was conducted into the royal presence. With the king sat Madame the Duchess. Henry beckoned to him, and commanded him, if he valued his life, to repeat the slanders which he had ventured to utter on the previous day. He now tremblingly obeyed, and, falling on his knees, prayed for pardon. “You deserve to be hanged for your mendacity,” replied the duchess, and turning to the king, she requested him so to decree. Henry, however, from whose eyes tears were falling in excess of mirth, replied, “No, no, *ma maitresse*; do you not understand that famine and poverty have irritated this poor devil? He has only repeated what he heard, and is not malignant. I pardon him; his boat shall no longer be taxed; then, madame, he will shout loud enough, ‘Vive Henri! vive Gabrielle!’” This adventure the king delighted to repeat everywhere with infinite gusto and satisfaction.

In spite of Sully’s strong disapproval, and the general popular discontent, Henry’s resolve to raise his beautiful

mistress to the throne had now become so fixed, that the refusal of Queen Marguerite to consent to a divorce highly irritated him, and embittered the otherwise overflowing cup of Gabrielle's prosperity. The duchess at one moment felt so certain that this long cherished hope was on the eve of realization as to tell those in her confidence, "that the hand of God, or the death of the king, could now alone hinder her from becoming their queen!" At other times she became so depressed by "hope deferred," as to undergo, during intervals of restless disquietude, much mental and bodily anguish, and the otherwise strong minded woman became superstitious, and in her anxiety to pry into the future, dabbled in magic and astrology. Sully tells us that she had "an escort of diviners who followed her everywhere. What is most remarkable, however, they never announced to her anything but misfortune. One told her that she would be married only once, another, that she would die young, another, that she would be betrayed by her friends, another, that the child to which she expected shortly to give birth would not bring her luck—all which predictions threw her into a gloomy melancholy. Gracienne, one of her waiting women, told me that the impression made on Madame la Duchesse by these warnings was so strong that she used often to dismiss her attendants and pass the night in tears." The fond Henry, however, seemed to redouble his tenderness for Gabrielle, and, at the approach of Lent, 1599, carried her away with him from the distraction of Paris to the delicious solitude of Fontainebleau. There the apartments always assigned to the queen were allotted to her. As, however, Gabrielle's approaching elevation occasioned much discussion just then, it was thought impolitic that Henry should pass the Passion-week in the society of his mistress. To avoid scandal, therefore, it was arranged that the duchess should become the guest of Zamet, the king's banker, whose newly built mansion, surrounded by a charming garden, in the Italian style, stood in the Marais, and offered a more cheerful abode than the vast halls of the temporarily deserted Louvre.

Various evil omens and dark presentiments are said to

have haunted both Henry and Gabrielle on the eve of their separation. The duchess commenced her journey on the Monday in Passion-week, and the king escorted her as far as Melun, riding beside her litter, attended by a glittering troop of cavaliers. From Melun she was to go the rest of the way by water. When Henry conducted her on board the boat, and was taking his farewell, Gabrielle seems to have had a strong foreboding that they should never meet again in this world. Her emotion and distress so worked upon the king's feelings that the impulsive "man of Bearn" carried her back to her litter, vowing that nothing on earth should part them. Certain nobles, however, in his retinue ventured to remonstrate earnestly against the monarch's weakness, pointing out forcibly the prejudice likely to accrue to the duchess herself, at that juncture, if she were not seen alone at her devotions by the Parisians. Gabrielle was the first to acquiesce, though with tears and sorrowful words, and once more embarked. When the boat put off, and as the distance widened between her and the royal lover, who stood on the bank fondly watching her receding form, she rose and stretched out her arms towards the still vacillating king; but his lords again interposed, and mounting his horse, Henry rode sorrowfully back to Fontainebleau.

Zamet, Gabrielle's host, was not only a skilful financier, but a clever negotiator, with a genius for politics of the first order. The duchess placed unbounded confidence in him, and she hoped by his intervention to arrive more speedily at her much-desired object—her marriage with Henry IV. Zamet, it appears, was already secretly initiated in the negotiations with Rome for the marriage of the king with Marie de' Medici. He probably communicated this fact to the Duchess de Beaufort, or, at least, made her comprehend the new position of the king; and the impression which such tidings produced upon Gabrielle d'Estrées—then in her last stage of pregnancy—may easily be imagined. On Holy Thursday, after making a hearty dinner of the most delicate viands and exquisitely dressed dishes, which Zamet had had prepared expressly to please her peculiar fancies,

she attended service at the church of the Petit Saint-Antoine, then much frequented by the Parisians, who were attracted there to hear its finely-sung sacred music. The Duchess de Retz and her daughters and Mademoiselle de Guise accompanied the duchess thither. A side chapel was appropriated to these distinguished ladies, and there, during the service, Gabrielle showed Mademoiselle de Guise letters from Rome, in which she was informed that what she desired would be shortly accomplished. She made her read also two letters received that morning from the king, so impassioned and full of impatience to behold her as his queen, that the fair favourite had good reason to be satisfied with their contents. Poor Gabrielle d'Estrées might well cling fondly to these fast-fading illusions; but disabused by the serious revelations of Zamet, she must doubtless have apprehended that the death-blow was about to be dealt to all her aspirations. Ere the service was over, she grew sick and faint, and requested Mademoiselle de Guise to return with her in the litter to Zamet's. On her arrival there she felt somewhat recovered; but still complaining of nausea, her host brought her a fine orange whilst the duchess was taking the air in his garden. She had no sooner eaten the fruit than Madame de Beaufort experienced a burning heat in the throat, and spasms of the stomach. The sufferer was undressed, but ere she could be placed in her bed, "she fell forwards," says Mademoiselle de Guise, "her limbs at the same time being convulsed." On regaining her senses, the unfortunate duchess, with tears, uttered the word "poison," and declared that she had been murdered. An hour afterwards she caused herself to be carried to the house of her aunt, Madame de Sourdis, in the cloister of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, where she underwent a series of convulsions of increased severity. These, however, subsiding towards morning, were succeeded by an interval of repose which gave some ground of hope; but the next day the duchess relapsed, suffering fearfully from alternate swooning and convulsions. The attack was so frightful and mysterious that all her most intimate friends fled from her bedside; and her aunt being absent, no one was present to

soothe the afflicted favourite in her last agonies. True, it is related that at length Madame de Martiques offered her services until the arrival of Madame de Sourdis; but this heartless and mercenary woman, while apparently administering religious consolation, managed to filch several valuable diamond rings from the fingers of the expiring duchess. An attendant who became aware of this base act, by observing that Madame de Martiques had attached the rings to the end of her *chapelet*, requested her, as she quitted the sick chamber, to give back the jewels, as an inventory existed of the duchess's valuables, and of those the king would require a strict account. Thus deserted in her extremity, the forsaken sufferer called piteously for the king, and besought the doctors to have her carried to him to bid him farewell. Her physicians, evidently baffled by her mysterious illness, could only stand helplessly looking on. The most skilful among them, La Rivière, was so affected by the fearful change in Gabrielle's countenance, that after advancing some three paces towards her couch, he covered his eyes with his hands, and exclaiming significantly, "*Hic est manus Domini!*" rushed from the chamber. Her appearance is described as truly appalling: "Madame la Duchesse lay," says an eyewitness, "with her eyes wide opened and distorted; her once beautiful face was livid, and her mouth so drawn on one side that it reached the back of her neck." During the whole of Good Friday she continued to suffer the most cruel torments, and during the evening gave birth prematurely to a child, whom Henry had fondly hoped would in due time have been his legitimate son, and heir to the crown of France. Gabrielle again rallied during a short interval, and called for writing materials; but relapsing into a state of unconsciousness, from which she never recovered, expired at midnight of Friday, April 10th, 1599.

The cause of the sudden death of this royal favourite will ever remain a mystery, and also a very interesting historical question. This much is certain—the grief of Henry at her loss was deep and sincere while it lasted. "At the first tidings which the king received," says the Chancellor Che-

verney, "of the sudden and dangerous illness of his mistress, he instantly mounted his horse to go to her, but having received a second letter announcing her death, which was confirmed by Marshal d'Ornano and the Marquis de Bassompierre, he showed, by the tears and plaints to which he abandoned himself, that on certain occasions heroes have their weaknesses as well as other men" At the remonstrances of those two noblemen the king returned to Fontainebleau, where he found most of the principal courtiers, who had hastened thither instantly on hearing the news of that sorrowful event, "to offer him their condolence" The king put on mourning of black cloth for the first nine days, and ordered his court to do the same, and afterwards wore the usual royal mourning of purple velvet for the ensuing three months The funeral ceremonies of the Duchess de Beaufort were conducted on the most splendid scale As her corpse lay in state, more than twenty thousand people sprinkled the bier with holy water The princesses of the blood performed the same ceremony On the following day the remains of Gabrielle and her son were deposited before the high altar of St Germain l'Auxerrois, under a regal dais A solemn requiem was chanted, at which the whole court was present—the children, father, sisters, and brother, with eight noblemen, officiating as chief mourners At the end of the service the funeral train set out for the abbey of Mabuisson, the abbess of which was a sister of the unfortunate deceased duchess, and there, in a vault before the high altar, she was interred The parliament of Paris meantime convened a special session, and voted an address of condolence to the king on the lamented demise of the Duchess de Beaufort Many other addresses of condolence were forwarded, but the sincerity of them is open to grave doubts The Parisians generally showed themselves by no means favourable to the memory of Gabrielle d'Estrees, whom they accused more harshly than justly as being the principal cause of the widespread misery of Henry's reign With his nobles and courtiers she was, with few exceptions, highly popular They put on mourning for her as for a princess of the blood royal,

and she was worthy of it on many accounts. Devoid of pride, arrogance, or haughtiness, she never abused the royal favour. Gentle, affable, polite, and beneficent, she had acquired the esteem and consideration of the highest personages of the court, who at her death really shared in the grief of their monarch. "We have scarcely ever seen mistresses of our kings," says D'Aubigné, "who have not drawn down upon themselves the hatred of the great, either by causing them to lose what they desired, or in making those unpopular who did not aid them, or by espousing the interests of their relatives, their own recompenses, or their vengeance. It is a marvel that this woman, whose extreme beauty was undebased by lasciviousness, could have lived in that court with so few enemies."

Though we have already given a description of her personal charms in early youth, we must not refrain from adding the following graphic portrait of her womanhood. "She was delicately fair," says Sainte-Beuve, "with light golden hair, thrown off her face in waving masses, slightly curled; an open brow, the space between the eyes—*l'entre œil*, as it was then called—large and noble; the nose straight and well formed; the mouth small, smiling, and roseate; while a tender and engaging expression threw a charm over the whole countenance. Her eyes were blue, with a clear, soft, and lively glance. She was a thorough woman in all her tastes, ambitions, and even in her faults. She was, moreover, perfectly natural in her manners, and intelligent without any pretension to learning, the only book found in her library being her "*Livre d'Heures*." At her death the worldly-wise and the learned recalled the prophecy of Nostradamus—

"Femme mourra et par bien grande escorne,
Jointe on verra la lune au capricorne."

The mistress was dead, and a politic marriage awaited the king.

The sudden and mysterious death of *the Fair Gabrielle* having thereby removed the difficulty of a legitimate alliance

for Henry IV., Sully pressed forward a treaty of marriage with Marie de' Medici, a niece of the reigning Duke of Tuscany. Marguerite was no longer unwilling to be loosed; she seconded the king's suit at Rome, and a divorce was obtained without much difficulty, as the King of France was worth pleasing, and there was no rival sovereign to plead against him. Henry, however, was not impatient to have the matter concluded; for though the contract was signed at Florence, in April, 1600, it was not till the following December that the king gave the queen-elect a meeting at Lyons.

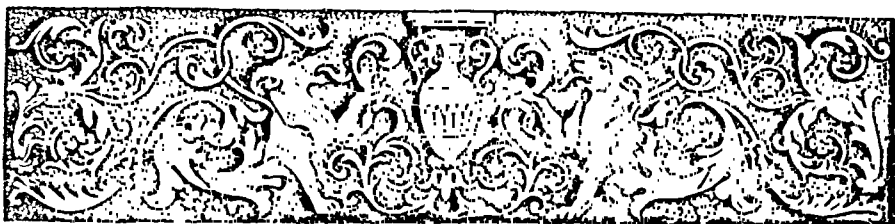
In fact, long before that time came, and ere he had cast off his mourning garments for the old, a new favourite was established, whose insolence and ambition embittered Marie de' Medici's future married life. Three weeks had seen Henry's passionate grief for Gabrielle ended, and the dominion of Henriette d'Entragues begun. This young lady was the eldest daughter of the Count and Countess d'Entragues (the latter being the once celebrated Marie Touchet, mistress of Charles IX.), and she seems to have attracted the notice of the king by her graceful dancing in a court ballet during the sway of the Duchess of Beaufort. At that time (1599) she was just twenty, of middle height, with a countenance radiant with beauty and vivacity; her auburn hair was richly profuse, and her dark, sparkling glance betrayed the passion and dauntless pride of her character. She had been well educated; her manners were lively, yet full of refinement; and in conversation she was clever, witty, and even captivating. This lady—better known as the Marchioness de Verneuil, the title granted her by Henry when she became his mistress—not only sold her honour for a price which Sully grudgingly paid and has indignantly recorded, but exacted a written promise of marriage if she should bear Henry a son within the year. While this promise was in her keeping—the royal lover playing false at once with the princess whom he was courting, and with her rival whom he never intended to make his queen—the matrimonial negotiations went on, and were concluded. The guilty woman was betrayed, and the innocent

one insulted by neglect and desertion before the month was out in which she reached France.

When the Marchioness de Verneuil found that overtures for an alliance between her royal lover and the Tuscan princess were no longer mere matter of rumour, but that the contract had been actually signed and sealed, the king solemnly betrothed, and the time fixed for the departure from Florence of *la Regina sposa di Francia*, the temper of the disappointed favourite gave way beneath the trial, and she bitterly upbraided Henry for the perjured faith of which she declared him to have been guilty in permitting his ministers to effect his betrothal with Marie de' Medici, when she had herself, as she affirmed, sacrificed everything for his sake. Her allusions to the Tuscan princess were couched in the most contemptuous and offensive terms, and she more than once declared that, had she not been treated with injustice, she should have been in the place occupied by "the fat banker's daughter." One day Henriette had the assurance to ask the king, at one of Zamet's fêtes, when he expected "*sa grosse banquière*." "Madame," replied Henry, "we expect her when our court shall be purged of such as you." The king's repartee rapidly circulated through Paris, and caused infinite merriment; for, dreading the notorious weakness of their monarch, the French gladly hailed even the prospect of renewed alliance with the Medici. To pacify her anger, Henry loaded the insolent *Marquise* with presents, and consoled her with new protestations. Nor did his folly end there; for so soon as her health was re-established, he wrote to entreat her to join him at Lyons, at which city it had been arranged the first interview between Henry and his Florentine bride should take place. The nature of Madame de Verneuil's reception at Lyons tended still further to restore peace between them. What the Lyonnese had previously done in honour of Diana of Poitiers, when, as the accredited and *official* mistress of Henry II., she visited their city, they repeated in that of Henriette d'Entragues, whose entrance within their gates was rather that of a crowned queen than a fallen woman; and this triumph was shortly afterwards

augmented by her reception of the standards taken by the king at Charbonnières, which he caused to be conveyed to her as a proof of his devotion, and which she with ostentatious pomp transferred to the church of St. Just de Lyon.

Madame de Verneuil, however, was no sooner apprised of the landing of Marie de' Medici, than, after having vehemently reproached the king with a haste which she designated as insulting to herself, she made instant preparations for her return to Paris, resolutely refusing to assist at the ceremonious reception of the new queen, whose life she vowed should be one long period of repentance for her "shameless usurpation of conjugal relations with his majesty;" nor could the expostulations of Henry, even accompanied as they were by the most profuse proofs of his continued affection, induce her to alter her determination. The exacting Favourite therefore returned to Paris, surrounded by adulation and splendour, and the king was left at liberty to bestow some portion of his thoughts upon his expected bride.



CHAPTER IX.

THE ITALIAN FAVOURITES OF MARIE DE' MEDICI.

I.

MARIE DE' MEDICI AND HER ITALIAN FAVOURITES.

HENRY OF BOURBON'S second consort was the daughter of Francis I., Grand Duke of Tuscany, and Jane, Archduchess of Austria. The domestic influences surrounding Marie from infancy had been unfavourable to the formation and development of an amiable and feminine character. Deprived of the priceless treasure of a mother's care, by the death of that parent ere she had attained her fourth year, the childhood of the young princess had been cheerless and solitary under the control of the low-born Venetian, Bianca Capello, her father's mistress, whom he afterwards secretly married. On the death of *la Maladetta Bianca*, and the accession of Marie's uncle Ferdinand in 1587, a brighter career might have opened for her, had that prince banished from his court, amongst the rest of the creatures and sycophants of the *parvenue* grand-duchess, one who, though apparently insignificant, eventually worked more evil to his orphan niece than all the others could have done had they been retained. This was a young girl named Eleo-

has traced with masterly hand the portrait of the original creator of his own fortunes and his predecessor in the favour of Marie de' Medici. The Florentine favourite was the successor to those cousins of the queen, the Orsini, her first *cavalieri serventi*.

Concini had been born and reared in the precincts of a court, he was the son of a notary, who by his talent had risen to be secretary of state at Florence, and nephew of Bartolomeo Concini, the wise and enlightened minister of Cosmo I. His father, Giovanni Concini, likewise eminently served the state during the reign of Francis I.,—holding the office of senator and auditor in chief of the Tuscan cabinet. Concini, disregarding the example of virtue and integrity displayed by his uncle and father, led a life of riot and profligacy, and had already dissipated the patrimony they bequeathed. Duke Ferdinand made many attempts to reclaim the prodigal, the more especially as Concini demonstrated tact and unusual powers of forbearance and intrigue. His courteous manner and handsome person had won the good will of Marie, to whom Concini had been specially presented by her cousin, the Duke di Bracciano.

The arrival of Marie de' Medici at Marseilles resembled rather an invasion of Italians than a bridal train, the three fleets, Tuscan, Papal, and Maltese, which attended her, numbering no fewer than seventeen galleys, conveying more than seventeen thousand men of all ranks. At Lyons she had to await the coming of Henry for about a week, he being detained by the war then raging in Savoy. Impatient to behold his new bride, the impulsive "man of Bearn" travelled post haste from the siege of Montmélian to Lyons, which city he reached on the 9th of December, 1600, shortly before midnight. The gates were shut, and the king was kept waiting a full hour outside on horseback. "The weather was rainy, and we had to wait at the bridge of Lyons a full hour, shivering with cold, and wet to the skin, because his majesty, wishing to surprise the queen, would not make himself known," so relates Sully. This was rather a refrigerating process for the little stock of love he had brought

with him to the interview; but ere the first chill was fairly got over, Henry had to encounter a second and greater. It was that given by the sight of the princess herself, who by no means resembled the flattering portrait he had contemplated some ten years back. Yet though Marie, on coming to France, was no longer in her girlhood, she was still in the very prime of life, having only just attained her twenty-seventh year. True, people rapidly grow old-looking in Italy, especially the Germans, from whom Marie, through her mother, descended. Two lustres, however, had elapsed since her picture, presented to Henry by the Grand Duchess, had excited his curiosity and flattered his self-love, for it was more than sufficiently attractive to command the attention of a monarch even less susceptible of female beauty than himself. Nor could he have forgotten that when, on another occasion, her portrait had been forwarded to the French court, together with that of the Spanish Infanta, Gabrielle d'Estrées, then in the full splendour of her own excelling loveliness, had exclaimed as she examined them, "I should fear nothing from the Spaniard, but the Florentine is dangerous."

On Henry entering his bride's chamber, booted, spurred, and partly cased in armour, Marie in an instant was at his feet, declaring that she had come to fulfil his wishes; and on raising her the royal bridegroom beheld a stout, thick-set woman, whose large, round, staring eyes were immovably fixed upon his, with a rather hard and sombre expression. He found her badly dressed in the Spanish style, but Austrian in look, shape, and weight. She could not speak French, having steadily refused to learn that language, on the score of its being "the tongue of heretics." On her voyage to France, a wretched romance in French ("Clorinde"), imitated from Tasso, had been put into her hands, and from that she now stammered out a few words.

Chilling and disappointing as all this was to Henry, the Tuscan princess, however, found herself on rising warmly and affectionately welcomed, and embraced several times heartily; nor was it until he had spent half an hour in conversation

with her that the king, weary and travel worn as he was, withdrew to partake of the refreshment which had been prepared for him, saying gaily, in his usual jocular manner, as he again embraced her, "that having travelled on horseback without bringing his bed with him, he begged she would lend him half of hers"

The next morning Henry appeared very serious, and testified, we are told, dissatisfaction on more accounts than one. That which displeased him more than any personal defects of the queen, was to find her surrounded by a complete set of *cicisbei* and *cavalieri serventi*—a class of hangers on which every Italian lady, agreeably to the new fashion then prevailing, thought herself entitled to have in attendance upon her. The first of these—the official, the accepted, the patented—was her cousin, Don Virginio Orsini, nominally her equerry. To him appertained the duty, whenever his royal mistress sat down to meals, to present the basin and towel wherewith to lave her fair hands. The second, Paolo Orsini, less advanced as to the post he held in her household, stood, however, scarcely less high in Marie's favour. And last, though not least to the king's annoyance, appeared hovering about his bride a young and very handsome man, of showy exterior and engaging manners, holding no definite appointment or function—*il signior Concino di Concino*. Among that trio, pondered Henry, a mute though eloquent history is comprised of that twenty-seven year old heart, representing past, present, and future. Whilst simply King of Navarre and husband of Marguerite, he had seen enough of those dangles after princesses among the minions of Henry III. to be otherwise than chagrined at finding the like pernicious custom about to be inaugurated in the household of his second consort.

Then, at all hours, early and late, at her chamber door was to be found a species of swarthy dwarf of the other sex, vigilantly on the watch, with sinister glances sparkling like coals of fire. Her figure was slight, and her face so thin and pale that her dark eyes appeared unnaturally large and prominent. Though her power over the queen was exer-

cised in silence, Henry soon found that the Florentine foster-sister was the most important person in his consort's train. Her disposition, however, was not so easy to fathom; she seemed timid and unobtrusive, and had acquired the strange habit, when sitting unemployed, of rolling little pellets of paper or of wax between her fingers and thumb. *The Galigai*, as she was soon termed by the French courtiers, showed humble deference to her royal mistress in public, but when all the other attendants were dismissed for the night, she remained to sleep at the foot of Marie's bed; and then commenced the reign of the queen's favourite.

Such were the marriage auguries, and such the agreeable apparition by which the king was greeted on entering the nuptial chamber. Whether it were that this dark vision haunted or pursued him therein, or that its occupant too rudely dispelled the ideal of his imagination, must be matter of conjecture, but the fact is placed on record that Henry's face wore a very serious expression next morning.

And well it might. During the few days which had been passed at Lyons by the bridal party, the feuds of Marie's Italian *coterie* had already disquieted the French court. Concini had fallen ill, and was compelled to keep his bed for two days. Believing himself neglected during his illness by his usher, who was a distant relative of the envoy, Giovannini, Concini dismissed that individual. This act was resented by Giovannini, and violent dissension ensued. Eleonora espoused the quarrel of Concini, and induced her royal mistress to reprove the envoy for his ingratitude. Giovannini, consequently, from being the abettor of the design of Concini and his betrothed, went over to the French party, which insisted that after his majesty's arrival the Italians should be dismissed *en masse*. The queen was further greatly provoked by hearing that Madame de Verneuil, on taking her departure from Lyons the day previous to her majesty's entry, had publicly boasted that King Henry's sojourn with *La Florentine* would be brief, and that he would speedily rejoin her at Verneuil.

During the next few weeks nothing but discord and con-

fusion prevailed Sully and Villeroy, chagrined to find that the influence with their royal mistress which they had intended to appropriate was usurped by two obscure Italians, counselled the king to dismiss *La Galigaï* and her lover, and to suggest the early departure of Don Antonio and the Duke di Bracciano Giovanni, meantime, betrayed to Sully the design of Concini to establish himself in France, and the envoy expatiated on the profligate propensities of the latter, which he showed must indeed be flagrant, when a cavalier, heir to the illustrious Bartolomeo Concini, was compelled to seek fortune in a foreign land The ladies and officers of the queen's household were therefore decisively appointed, and the roll presented to Marie by the king himself Not one Italian name appeared thereon, the Duchess de Nemours was confirmed in the office of Mistress of the Robes, Madame de Guercheville as first lady of honour, and Madame de Richelieu *dame d'atours*, or first lady of the bedchamber Marie, however, rejected the last nomination, and imperiously demanded that Eleonora Galigaï should have this office, and, moreover, that Henry should consent to the immediate marriage of the former with Concini, whom her majesty declared she intended to gratify with the post of chief equerry Henry thereupon positively declined to sanction these requests, when the anger of the queen became so extravagant, that a scene of tears and reproaches ensued The king at last stated that he would consent to the marriage, and at her majesty's request portion the bride, provided that Eleonora and her husband returned to Florence As this suggestion was supposed to emanate from Giovanni, the queen commenced a persecution of the latter, though the resident envoy of Tuscany, and even refused to admit him to her presence Madame de Richelieu, meantime, offended by the haughty disdain with which her services were repaid, resigned her office and retired from Lyons, which increased the *imbroglio* The sacrifice was considerable, for the emolument of this office was important to Madame de Richelieu, who was the widow of the grand provost, and embarrassed by an estate heavily mortgaged Her young son, then a humble student

of the Sorbonne, but afterwards the famed Cardinal Minister, eventually remembered this incident to the detriment of Queen Marie. Vinta, the Tuscan minister, wrote from Paris to his master, the Grand Duke, detailing the *fracas*, and complaining of the conduct of Giovannini and Concini, to whom he imputed the blame of these dissensions. The envoy, being summoned to justify himself, informed the Grand Duke of the intrigues of La Galigai and Concini, and of the resentment manifested by Queen Marie, "which," he wrote, "if persisted in, would speedily ruin her influence with the king, who liked only cheerful and engaging women." Ferdinand therefore directed his old servant Vinta to seek audience of the queen, whom he had known from childhood, and represent the sorrow of the Grand Duke at these unworthy dissensions. "You have, madam, shown concern alone for the aggrandizement of an obscure lady, as if such was the aim of your glorious alliance, which has cost his highness your uncle political perils and diplomatic labours. I am commanded to remind you that your said uncle could have disposed of your hand to the Duke of Braganza, or to the Duke of Parma, and thus doomed you to a career of comparative obscurity. Madam, instead of rewarding your said uncle, by permitting him to rejoice and participate in your joy and prosperity, you allow these audacious intriguers to mar all by their rapacity, and even go the length of alienating from you your royal husband by unjust reproaches and anger."* Marie sullenly replied, "that she was miserable, and without influence, and that the king was governed by La Verneuil; therefore she intended to retain the friends of her youth."

A reconciliation was at last achieved between the august couple, through the good offices of Vinta, Sully, and Madame de Guercheville. The king nevertheless persisted in his refusal to allow the name of Eleonora Galigai to be inscribed on the household roll of his consort, but consented that Donna Eleonora might remain at the court of France, provided she claimed neither office nor precedence. This concession

* Galluzzi, "Istoria del Granducato," lib. v.

became the source of unnumbered calamities, for the Grand Duke was then willing and able to compel the two adventurers, Concini and Galigai, to return to Florence. The little firmness of the king encouraged unfortunately the mutinous spirit of the queen, who, perceiving that persistent agitation generally wearied the king into concession, took ample profit of this advantage.

During the progress of these vexatious feuds, often must Sully have recalled his conversation at Nantes with Henry the Great, when the king confided to his ear the indispensable endowments necessary to attach him to the woman whom he might espouse—beauty, prudence, gentleness, wit, fecundity, wealth, and illustrious descent. Marie de' Medici possessed many of these qualifications, but was signally deficient in prudent and willing gentleness, yet this failure eventually sufficed, with a prince of Henry's temperament, to render the conjugal yoke almost intolerable.

Wearied at last of the annoyances he still experienced at Lyons, Henry, about the end of January, 1601, two days after he had signed a treaty of peace with Savoy, resolved to take a temporary leave of the queen, in order, as he asserted, to precede and receive her majesty at Fontainebleau. The true object of the royal journey, however, was to visit Madame de Verneuil, to persuade her to return to Paris. Every day the king wrote to his bride, as if nothing but harmony had prevailed between them. In one of these letters Henry gives the queen a few words of counsel, which it would have been well, under her circumstances, had Marie heeded. "Doubt not," wrote his majesty, "that I love you dearly, for now you obey my will, believe that this is the true way to govern me, in short, I desire alone to be so governed by you." The king, after despatching this letter, set out for the Chateau de Verneuil, a fact which, when it came to the knowledge of the queen, caused this advice to have rather an exasperating effect, as her majesty deemed it, as she said, "a gross and stinging insult," to be abandoned immediately after marriage, in order that the king might visit his mistress.

The Chateau de Verneuil, thirty-six miles distant from Paris, was then a magnificent though gloomy edifice, surrounded by a moat. Its architecture was singular, the chateau consisting of eight lofty and highly decorated pavilions, united by spacious buildings on the flanks, forming a quadrangle. The entrance was through a magnificent vestibule, lined with marble, and adorned by six statues of the princes of the house of Vendome. To Verneuil, Henriette retired on leaving Lyons. She received the king with transports of joy. The beauty and fascination of his mistress riveted her empire, and the jealousies of Marie and the rivalries of the suite were forgotten by Henry in her society. The king spent four days with Madame de Verneuil, and took leave possessed of the promise of Henriette to grace the fêtes on the queen's entry into Paris, on condition that his majesty insured her honourable and public reception from his consort.

When Marie entered Paris, escorted by the lords of her household, reclining in a sumptuous litter drawn by mules, the enthusiasm of the French courtiers, it appears, had a little abated, owing to the disgraceful altercations at Lyons. She alighted at the Hotel Goudy, in the Faubourg St. Germain, where Henry, attended by a brilliant retinue, greeted her majesty. During the same afternoon, when the principal ladies of the court came to pay their homage, the queen's presence of mind was destined to undergo a rude ordeal. In the forenoon the king sent for the Duchess de Nemours, and desired her to escort Madame de Verneuil to the evening's festivities, and present her to the queen. The duchess ventured respectfully to intimate her reluctance to undertake so onerous an office, alleging as her reason that such a measure on her part must inevitably deprive her of the confidence of her royal mistress. Henry, however, brusquely and significantly reiterated his command; the mortified duchess, therefore, was compelled to lead the mistress of the monarch into the circle, and to name her to the agitated and outraged queen. The evident embarrassment of her *grande maitresse* attracted the attention of Marie.

Henry, however, advanced, and taking the hand of his mistress he led her to his consort, saying, "*M'amie !* behold Madame la Marquise de Verneuil, a lady, as you know, well affected towards myself, but who desires also to become your very humble servant !" Henriette curtsied and touched the royal robe. The king, however, deeming his mistress's obeisance not reverential enough, himself placed the hand of Madame la Marquise on the hem of the queen's mantle, and signed her to kneel and put it to her lips. Marie de' Medici in this trying emergency was sustained by her Italian blood, and although her lip quivered, she vouchsafed no other token of displeasure, but after coldly returning the curtsy of the favourite, who was blazing with jewels and radiant with triumph, she turned abruptly aside to converse with one of the court ladies, leaving the marquise still standing before her, as though she had suddenly become unconscious of her existence. At supper, Madame de Verneuil sat, by royal command, at the queen's table, and several times presumed to address her majesty, having recovered her accustomed assurance. This act on the part of his majesty was universally condemned, especially as people perceived that the queen's eyes twice filled with tears on being addressed so insolently. A reaction in favour of Marie resulted, which, as the feuds of her household were for the moment appeased, the queen took care to improve. Her vivacious yet courteous manners imposed respect upon the ladies of the court, who, accustomed for so many years to pay *devoirs* to Gabrielle d'Estrées, had almost forgotten the etiquette exacted by the presence of a queen consort.

Hitherto, since the accession of Henry IV, the court of France had been one of the least splendid in Europe, if in reality it could be said to exist at all—a circumstance to which many causes had conduced. On the arrival of the Tuscan princess, however, all was changed, and as though he sought to compensate her by splendour and display for the mortifications which awaited her private life, the king began forthwith to revive the traditional magnificence of the French court. Two days after their arrival at the Louvre, their majesties, attended by the whole of their

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respective households, and accompanied by all the princes and great nobles then resident in the capital, partook of a superb banquet at the arsenal, given by Sully in honour of his appointment as Grand Master of the Artillery. At this festival the minister, casting aside the gravity of his functions and the dignity of his rank, and even forgetful, as it would appear, of the respect which he owed to his new sovereign, not satisfied with pressing upon his guests the costly viands that had been prepared for them, no sooner perceived that the Italian ladies of her majesty's suite were greatly attracted by the wine of Arbois, of which they were partaking freely, quite unconscious of its potency, than he caused the cwers containing the water that they mingled with it to be refilled with a strong white wine, but so limpid as to be quite undistinguishable to the eye from the purer liquid for which it had been substituted. The consequences of this cruel pleasantry may be inferred. The heat, the movement, and the noise by which they were surrounded, together with the increased thirst caused by the insidious draughts that they were unconsciously imbibing, only induced the unfortunate Florentine damsels to recur the more perseveringly to their refreshing libations; and at length the result became so apparent as to attract the notice of the king, who, already prepossessed like Sully himself against the queen's foreign retinue, laughed heartily at a treachery which he appeared to consider as the most amusing feature of the entertainment.*

II.

THE QUEEN'S FAVOURITE COURTS THE KING'S FAVOURITE—
THEIR CURIOUS COMPACT — ROYAL INTRIGUES AND
ROYAL SQUABBLES—INCREASING INFLUENCE OF CONCINI
—HENRY IV. ASSASSINATED.

PREVIOUS to the departure of the king and queen to St. Germain in the month of February, 1601, Don Antonio de' Medici and the Duke di Bracciano took leave of their

* "L'Etoile," Sully, liv. ii.

that the reception of his mistress by the haughty and indignant princess could be purchased by a mere slight to Madame Richelieu, than he consented to sanction the appointment of the Italian follower of Marie to the post of honour; while Eleonora soon succeeded by her tears and entreaties in wringing from her royal mistress a reluctant acquiescence to her request. But it was a disastrous day for Marie de' Medici when she condescended to make terms and accept such humiliating favours from her rival, and compromise her queenly dignity by admitting the Marquise to her intimacy. The courtiers then ridiculed the position they had before respectfully commiserated. Intense was the surprise when Madame de Verneuil took up her abode at the Louvre, in a suite of apartments immediately above those of the queen, and was seen driving out in the same carriage with her majesty. Thus a hollow peace was patched up between the unequal rivals; and Madame de Verneuil at length found herself in possession of a folding seat in the queen's reception-room, while her coadjutrix, as *dame d'atours*, triumphantly took her place among the nobles and ladies of the land. The position was a monstrous and unnatural one. Both the wife and the mistress were about to become mothers, and the whole court was degraded by so unblushing an exhibition of the profligacy of the monarch.

Dearly, however, did the queen purchase the elevation of Concini and his future wife, and the brief sunshine which followed her unworthy condescension. It was not only the extreme personal beauty of Concini which had captivated the heart of Eleonora, but she saw, as she believed, in his far-reaching ambition and flexible character the very elements calculated, in conjunction with her own firmer nature and higher intellect, to lead her on to the most lofty fortunes. It is probable, however, that had La Galigai continued to attend the queen in her original and obscure office of waiting-woman, Concini, who was of better blood than herself, and who could not, moreover, be supposed to find any attraction in the diminutive figure and sallow countenance of his country-woman, would never have been induced to consent to such

an alliance, but Eleonora was now on the high road to wealth and honour, while his own position was scarcely defined, and thus ere long the consent of the queen to their marriage was solicited by Concini himself. To obtain Henry's consent to the match, and the establishment of Concini, however, proved a more difficult affair. Henriette asked for time, therefore, and advised that Concini should accompany his patron, the Duke di Bracciano, to England.

Rejoicings were general throughout France, when Marie became the mother of a Dauphin (afterwards Louis XIII). People embraced each other, weeping for joy—from the fact that more than eighty years had elapsed since the birth of a successor to the crown who had been eligible to bear the title of Dauphin. Three weeks after, a son was born to Madame la Marquise at Verneuil. The king sent La Riviere, his physician, but did not visit his mistress—an omission which brought a series of angry letters from Henriette.

When, however, Queen Marie and Madame de Verneuil were convalescent, they met again in Paris on more friendly terms. Marie had declared that, in the event of her becoming the mother of a dauphin, she would, at the earliest possible period, dance a ballet in honour of the king, which should exceed in magnificence every exhibition of the kind that had hitherto been attempted. As fifteen of the most beautiful women of the court were to be selected to compose the party of the queen—each representing a *virtue*—the Marquise, equivocal as the attribute might be in her case, set her heart upon being one of the envied number. The facility of the queen, therefore, was again sought to be taken advantage of, through the medium of her foster sister, for this fresh enterprise, but even La Galigai herself was startled by so astounding a proposition. Eleonora soon discovered, however, from the resolute attitude assumed by the Marquise, that her powerful intercession with the king was not otherwise to be secured. She expected the return of her betrothed, Concini, but it was with even less of hope than apprehension that the agitated Mistress of the Robes kissed the hand of Madame de Verneuil, and assured her that she would leave no effort

untried to obtain the queen's consent to her wishes. When, however, she had withdrawn, and was traversing the gallery which communicated with the apartments of Marie, she began to entertain serious misgivings: the pretension of the Marquise was so monstrous, that, even conscious as she was of the extent of her own influence over her royal foster-sister, she almost dreaded to communicate the result of her interview, and nearly despaired of success. But with the resolute perseverance which marked her character, she resolved to brave the utmost displeasure of the queen, rather than forego this last hope of a union with Concini. It was, nevertheless, with a trembling heart, and drowned in tears, that she presented herself before Marie as the voluntary bearer of this new and aggravated insult; while, incomprehensible as it must appear in this age, whatever may have been the arguments and entreaties of which she was clever enough to avail herself, it is at least certain that they were ultimately successful; and that she was authorized by the queen to communicate to Madame de Verneuil her majesty's willingness to accede to her request, provided that the Marquise pledged herself in return to perform her portion of the contract.

The fête was duly given at the end of the year, with a splendour unprecedented since the luxurious days of the regency of Catherine de' Medici. The ballet was danced by the queen herself, masqued, and in the character of Venus, leading by the hand the little Duke de Vendome,* attired as Cupid, and attended by her fifteen nymphs, led by Madame de Verneuil, who danced, sang, and alternately deposited wreaths of laurel at the feet of the king, each verse ending with the refrain—

“Il faut que tout vous rende hommage,
Grand Roi ! miracle de votre âge !”

The subject of the pageant was the glory of King Henry, *Pacificateur de l'Europe*, and it is mentioned by the gravest contemporary historians as something marvellous—even by M. de Thou. Gratified at the sensation caused by the un-

* Cæsar de Vendome was the son of Henry IV. and *the Fair Gabrielle*. He married the daughter of Philip Emmanuel de Lorraine, Duke de Mercœur.

exampled magnificence and stateliness of his royal consort, the splendour of whose diamonds produced a startling effect, Henry smilingly inquired of the nuncio, "if he had ever before seen so fine a squadron?" "*Bellissimo e pericolosissimo*" was the reply of the gallant but prudent prelate.

The king and Madame la Marquise were so enraptured with this condescension on the part of the queen, that Henry authorized Madame de Verneuil to intimate his consent to the marriage of La Galigai on the return of her betrothed, and, moreover, granted the post of *chevalier d'honneur* demanded for Concini. Letters of naturalization were granted him, and on his return to Paris, after taking leave of his patron the Duke di Bracciano, who was making the tour of England, his marriage with Eleonora Galigai was celebrated, probably in the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois.

Concini and his wife very soon became suitors of M. and Madame de Sully. Eleonora begged the influence of the former to aid in adjusting the palace squabbles, and privately to admonish her majesty, while Concini called Madame de Sully *sa maîtresse*, and prided himself on his private consultations at the Arsenal. During the sojourn of the court at Blois, a domestic broil, infinitely more serious than any by which it had been preceded, took place between Henry and his consort. The queen's violent temper and jealousy broke forth with fresh acrimony on the old subject of Madame la Marquise. Henriette, it seems, had recommenced her irritating innuendoes, and it was told the queen that she had publicly said, "The little prince, son of the Florentine, bears no resemblance to his royal father, but has the dark complexion and harsh features of the Medici." Altercations also happened between Henry and Marie relative to the cousin Duke di Bracciano—disputes which owed their origin to Madame la Marquise, who audaciously asserted that her majesty's preference had ever been given, and still rested with, Don Virginio Orsini. Capesigue, in his history, has shown less desire than Sully to envelope this royal quarrel in mystery, and plainly asserts that, after mutual reproaches had passed between the royal couple, the queen became so

enraged, that she sprung out of bed, and, throwing herself upon the monarch, severely scratched him in the face—a violence which he immediately repaid with interest, and which induced him to summon his minister to the palace, whose first care was to prevail on the king to retire to another apartment. Sully tells us that he performed the part of mediator, going from chamber to chamber, and entreating their majesties to be reconciled. The minister makes mysterious allusion to the cause of the royal dissension, and states that he gave his word of honour to the king and queen to conceal the true origin of the *fracas*. Other sources, however, reveal that this broil, and many others, arose from the king's jealousy of the Duke di Bracciano.

It would be wearisome, however, to dwell further upon these domestic discords. As might be expected in a household thus divided and polluted, intrigues and quarrels, negotiations and compromises ensued, which were pitiable and disgraceful beyond description. Marie had the empty state of royalty, and was met by vexations and contradictions at every turn. Her lively and fascinating rival, after having long troubled the palace and been the talk of the capital, became at last the troubler of the state. When her influence was on the wane, she began to talk like a queen, pretended that a written promise might supersede the marriage rite, and gave out that her son's claim to the throne was better than that of the Dauphin, whom Marie had borne to Henry in the year succeeding their marriage. Her pretensions were backed by her father and step-brother, the Count d'Auvergne, who were convicted of a treasonable correspondence with the King of Spain, and sentenced to death, but spared for the sake of the royal favourite. The lady herself was successively condemned to banishment from court, and to imprisonment for life, but was subsequently pardoned and restored to favour. Restless, faithless, shameless, covetous of wealth and power, she yet kept the king more or less her slave almost to the last year of his life.

Meanwhile the influence of Concini and his wife over the mind of the queen unhappily increased with time, until the

arrogance of the former became so great, that he had the insolence to enter the lists at a great tilting at the ring, which was publicly held at the Rue St Antoine, in the presence of the monarch and his court, a piece of presumption which was rendered still more unpalatable to Henry by the fact that the Italian, who was well skilled in such exercises, bore away the prize for which the whole of his own nobility had contended. More serious matters, however, now occupied the king's attention in lieu of the degrading anarchy which had so long reigned within the walls of the palace. During the three years of unusual peace which preceded his murder, the active spirit of Henry was earnestly engaged in a grand project for the humiliation of the house of Austria in both its branches, and the rearrangement of the family of European states. In 1610, when the soldier-king was about to put himself at the head of his army—ordered to concentrate at Chalons by the end of April—Marie de' Medici was appointed regent of the kingdom, and, at the suggestion of Concini, insisted on being crowned. The ceremony of Marie's coronation—which was agreed to with great unwillingness by the king, who altered the arrangements for his departure in order to gratify her—took place on the 13th of May. From that moment he seems to have been seized with a sombre presentiment of some impending catastrophe, and repeatedly expressed himself convinced that his days would be cut short before the time appointed for his quitting the capital. On the following day Henry fell a victim to the dagger of the assassin Ravaillac.

Marie de' Medici showed on this occasion neither grief nor surprise, and shared with the Jesuits the suspicion of having been implicated in the deed. A tradition states that, at the moment the blow was struck, Concini opened the door of the queen's chamber, and, without crossing the threshold, uttered the words, "*E ammazzato*" (*He is murdered*). "We should not," says Michelet, "have recalled this tradition, had not the queen herself repeated the expression in remorseful accents when Concini was in his turn assassinated."

The memory of this great sovereign has always been pre-eminently popular with the French nation, both on account of his many generous, attractive, and noble qualities, and on account of the great substantial benefits which his wise and prosperous rule conferred upon the country. But these peculiar recommendations have, perhaps, caused his general character to be somewhat overrated. Henry was formed to be the idol of a multitude; and while his brilliant gifts and accomplishments inspired admiration, and secured him warm personal regard, they naturally cast into the shade those lamentable weaknesses, follies, and vices by which his name is tarnished.

III.

CONCINI'S ARROGANCE AND AMBITION — CREATED MARQUIS D'ANCRE — PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE FLORENTINE FAVOURITES — D'ANCRE MADE MARSHAL AND PRIME MINISTER — HE INSULTS LOUIS XIII. — HIS UNPOPULARITY — HIS MURDER — FATE OF MARIE DE' MEDICI.

THE mystery of Henry's assassination has never been unravelled. It will probably ever remain one of the unsolved problems of modern history.

Marie now seized the reins of power. An interior council or secret cabinet was formed, including, besides Concini, the Jesuit Cotton, the Pope's nuncio, and the Spanish ambassador. Its policy was precisely the reverse of that pursued by Henry IV., and tended to establish an intimate friendship and alliance between France and both branches of the house of Austria. Sully, Jeannin, and the other faithful councillors of the great Henry were all dismissed, and their places filled by the Italian favourites of the queen, at whose head stood Concino Concini.

Thus, in heart-burning and uncertainty, closed the year which had commenced with the assassination of the king.

An arrogant and unruly aristocracy, a divided and jealous ministry, and a harassed and discontented population were its bitter fruits

With all Concini's arrogance and presumption, it was not until after the death of Henry that he ventured to give the reins to his ambition. Unfortunately, the ambition of the Florentine favourite was more powerful than his devotion to his benefactress, and his influence continued unabated. Moreover, his vanity was mortified, as he could not conceal from himself that he was indebted for his position at court, indefinite as it was, to the affection of the Regent for his wife, and he consequently urged Eleonora to induce the queen to purchase for him the town of Ancres in Picardy, whose possession would invest him with the title of Marquis, and assure to him the consideration due to that rank. Madame di Concini accordingly proffered her request, which was conceded without difficulty, for Marie was at that moment, to adopt the expression of Richelieu, "keeping her hands open," and this purchase formed a comparatively unimportant item in her lavish grants. Encouraged by so facile a success, the Italian adventurer was, however, by no means disposed to permit even this coveted dignity to satisfy his ambition, and through the same agency he, ere long, became Governor of Peronne, Roye, and Montdidier, which he purchased from M. de Cr  quy, by the queen's assistance, for the sum of forty thousand crowns. Concini now found himself not only placed by his court appointment on a par with the peers of the realm, but also enabled, by the munificence of the regent and the revenues of his new government, to rival them in magnificence.

Nature had been lavish to Concini, his person was well formed and graceful, while his countenance beamed with intelligence and gave promise of far greater intellect than he in reality possessed. It was this fatal beauty which had inspired Eleonora Galigai with a passion that was destined to be her destruction, for no doubt can be entertained that, had she never become his wife, her career might have been one of happiness and honour, but while Concini, absorbed

in his wild schemes of self-aggrandizement, trampled upon every consideration of honour and honesty, in order to attain his object, Eleonora, conscious of her own want of personal attractions, and loving her husband with a devotion springing from gratitude and admiration, suffered herself to be overruled by his vanity and arrogance, and sacrificed her reason and her judgment to her affection.

Gliding from one glittering group to another, with a quiet self-possession and a calm composure strangely at variance with the scene around her, moved a lady whose remarkable appearance must have challenged attention, even had her singular career not already tended to make her an object of universal curiosity and speculation. Short of stature and slender of form, with a step as light and noiseless as that of an ærial being—her exquisitely moulded, although diminutive figure draped in a robe of black velvet, made after a fashion of which the severe propriety contrasted forcibly with the somewhat too liberal exposure of the period—with a countenance pale even to sallowness, delicately chiselled features, and large eyes, encircled by a dark ring, only a few shades less black than the long lashes by which they were occasionally concealed—a mass of rich and glossy hair, tightly banded upon her forehead, and gathered together in a heavy knot, low in her neck behind, supported by large bodkins tipped with jewels—and above all, with that peculiar expression spread over her whole person which is occasionally to be marked in individuals of that exceptional organization which appears to be the lot of such as are predestined to misery.

Not a princess of the blood, not a duchess of the realm, but had a smile and a courteous and eager word to bestow upon this apparently insignificant personage; at whose signal even the door of the queen's private closet, closed against other intruders, opened upon the instant, as though she alone, of all that brilliant galaxy of rank and wealth, were to know no impediment, and to be subjected to no delay.

Upon the retirement of Sully from office, the Marquis d'Ancre became pre-eminent at court; and not only the

ministers, but even the princes of the blood themselves, looked with distrust upon his power over the queen. Though the sunshine of royal favour gilded his course, it was not therefore all plain-sailing with Concini. Between the Italian favourite and the Duke d'Epemon especially, a feeling of hatred had grown up, which, although as yet veiled by the policy for which each was so distinguished, only waited a fitting opportunity to reveal itself on both sides: the struggle for power was not the less resolute because it was carried on amid smiles and courtesies. On entering upon his duties as first lord of the bedchamber also, M. d'Ancre had a serious misunderstanding with the Duke de Bellegarde, who refused to allow him to take possession of the apartments in the Louvre set apart for the person holding that rank, during the year in which he was on duty, on the pretext that the Marquise his wife being already lodged in the palace, he had no right to claim any further accommodation. This point Concini failed to carry. The hatred, also, that De Luynes felt for Concini is easily explained, it being merely the jealousy of a rival favourite. The Italian was to the mother of the king precisely what De Luynes was to the king himself, and as Marie possessed more power than her son, so also was her follower more richly recompensed. Still, however, the game was an unequal one, of which the chances were all in favour of De Luynes, for Concini was playing away the present, while his adversary was staking upon the future.

Blinded by their vanity as much as by their self-interests, Concini and his wife plotted with Condé and Bouillon to put Condé in possession of the royal fortress of Château Trompette, which would have given the first prince of the blood the control of Guenne. Of the importance of not yielding up that stronghold, the surrender of which could not fail to prove prejudicial to the interests of the king and the tranquillity of the nation, Marie de' Medici had been made fully aware. When, therefore, Eleonora urged the pretensions of Condé with much pertinacious resolution, the dignity of the queen mother took the alarm, and she expressed herself with considerable bitterness to the pre-

sumptuous favourite. At this crisis Concini entered the apartment, and, with as little caution as his wife had previously exhibited, persisted in urging upon his harassed mistress the same unpalatable advice; until, utterly wearied and deeply indignant at an interference which exceeded all bounds of courtesy and respect, Marie commanded them both to quit her presence, and gave instant orders that they should not again be admitted until she had signified her pleasure to that effect.

Great was the exultation of the courtiers when the disgrace of Concini became known; but that of the ministers, as they learnt its cause, was even more profound.

It was not long, however, ere Eleonora succeeded in effecting a reconciliation with her justly offended mistress. Marie de' Medici had striven to believe that she could dispense with the services of Eleonora; but every day, and almost every hour, she became more convinced of her utter helplessness without her. Madame d'Ancre had been the playmate of her infancy, the friend of her girlhood; she was the confidante of her most hidden thoughts, her counsellor in difficulty, and her consoler in her moments of trial. Concini might still be made to feel and suffer for his fault, but she could not dispense with the society and support of Eleonora.

Meanwhile the Princess de Conti, who dreaded the effect of this same reconciliation upon herself and family, despatched a messenger to the Prince de Condé, to inform him that Madame d'Ancre was at that moment closeted with the Regent, and that he must forthwith devise some method of terminating so dangerous a conference. M. de Condé was for a moment aghast; and on reflection could adopt no better expedient than that of prevailing upon M. de Bièves, the governor of the Duke d'Orleans, to suggest to the young prince that he should proceed to the apartments of his royal mother, and pay his respects to her majesty. Monsieur obeyed; and Eleonora was still seated on a cushion at the feet of her foster-sister, with her pale face pillowed upon her knees, when Madame de Conti threw open the door of the cabinet and announced the prince.

"Let Monseigneur await my pleasure without!" exclaimed Marie, angrily "I understand the motive of this breach of etiquette, and shall reward it as it deserves *Eleonora cara*," she added, as the drapery again closed over the portal, "dry your tears, I owe you some recompense for all that you have suffered, and I will not be tardy in my requital"

At this instant some one scratched upon the door of the royal closet

"Again!" cried the queen, indignantly "See who waits, Madame du Fargis"

The countess proceeded to draw aside the tapestry "Madame," she said, as she retired a pace or two with a profound curtsy, "his Majesty the King"

"Ha!" exclaimed the regent, starting from her seat, and advancing towards the young sovereign, whom she tenderly embraced, "your visit could not have been more welcome or better timed, my son The death of M de Tervagues has created a vacancy which must be at once filled, and I have a marshal's commission for you to sign"

The wife of Concini gazed eagerly into the face of her royal mistress Marie smiled "Go, madame," she said, affectionately, "and bid the Marquis d'Ancre hasten hither upon the instant, to kiss the gracious hand from which he is about to receive a marshal's *bâton*"

Eleonora knelt before the startled king, who suffered her in silence to perform the same ceremony, and then, radiant with happiness, she pressed the jewelled fingers of the queen to her quivering lips

"And, hark you, Eleonora," pursued Marie, "cause Concini to be announced by his new title when he seeks admission here This will at once put an end to a host of rivalries, which are now unavailing"

Madame d'Ancre hastily withdrew, but as she passed through the apartments of the queen she remarked that the waiting room was already thronged by a crowd of courtiers, who had been attracted thither by curiosity, while they, in their turn, did not fail to detect, in the flushed cheek and flashing eye of the Marquis, the indications of some new

triumph. Little, however, were they prepared for its extent ; and when Concini some minutes afterwards appeared, with a sarcastic smile upon his lips, and glanced a look of defiance around him, even while he bowed right and left alike to his friends and to his enemies, every pulse quickened with anxiety. The suspense was but momentary. The Italian was preceded by one of the royal pages, who, as the captain of the guard flung back the door of the cabinet in which Louis XIII. was still closeted with his mother, announced, in a voice so audible that it was heard throughout the apartment, "*Monseigneur le Maréchal d'Ancre.*"

"Concini a marshal of France !" exclaimed simultaneously the Dukes of Guise, Epernon, and Bellegarde, who were standing together ; and then there was a dead silence as the draperied door closed upon the exulting favourite.

Concini, who was a soldier only in name, having thus become marshal of France, as Voltaire remarks, "without having ever drawn a sword," became at the next step prime minister of France, "without knowing the laws of the kingdom." The Marquis d'Ancre had climbed quickly to the summit of his ambition ; he and his wife were now the virtual sovereigns of France, and their yearly income was estimated at three millions of livres. Seven years had elapsed since the murder of Henry IV., during which the reckless extravagance of Marie, and the insatiable greediness of her favourites, had reduced the finances of the State to the lowest possible ebb ; while the enormous and constantly increasing burden of the taxes had exhausted the patience of the people. The nobility, irritated at seeing the wealth of the nation squandered upon foreigners, while they were excluded from the sweets of power, began to arm themselves for the purpose of enforcing what they considered to be their rights, and at the head of the movement was the Prince de Condé. The estrangement of the princes having followed closely upon the dismissal of the minister, Concini devised various means of representing their conduct as criminal, and thus constrained them to throw themselves with their followers into various distant fortresses. This, however, did not content him ; he was desirous of assuring to himself the control of the young

king's person, by depriving him of the liberty of visiting his different hunting lodges in the environs of Paris, and he confined his diversions at last to the gardens of the Tuileries. Thus Louis, although the sovereign of a great nation, was exposed to restrictions and privations—merely physical, it is true, but still sufficiently irritating to increase his natural moroseness and discontent. While the Maréchal d'Ancre displayed at court a profusion and splendour which amounted to insolence, the young king was frequently without the means of indulging the mere caprices common to his age. Unhappily, Louis XIII derived little pleasure from the society of his young and lovely wife, he made no friends, and thus he was flung entirely into the power of his wily favourite, De Luynes, a young man of great ambition, address, and insinuating manners, who had first recommended himself to the king by his skill in falconry and other field sports, and who, aware that the king could hate although he could not love, was unremitting in his endeavours to excite him against his royal mother and her favourites. The infatuated Concini seconded his efforts but too well, for, unable to bear his fortunes meekly, he paraded his riches and his power with an arrogance which tended to justify the aversion of his enemies.

On one occasion, shortly after the dismemberment of his little court, the monarch of France, having refused to join a hunting party organized by the queen-mother, found himself entirely deserted save by De Luynes and a single valet, and overcome by mortification and melancholy, he leant his head upon his hand and wept bitterly. For some time not a sound was heard in the Louvre save the sighing of the wind through the tall trees of the palace garden, and the measured tread of the sentinels, when suddenly a tumult arose in the great court, the trampling of horses, the voices of men, and the clashing of weapons were blent together, and dashing away his tears, Louis desired his favourite to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

"It is the Maréchal d'Ancre, sire, who has just alighted," said De Luynes, as he approached the window.

In a few minutes the Italian was announced, and entered

the royal apartment, followed by a train of forty gentlemen, all magnificently attired.* At this spectacle Louis started from his seat, and with a bitter smile inquired of the marshal-minister his motive for thus parading before his sovereign a state which could only be intended as a satire upon his own privations.

To this question the vain-glorious adventurer replied in a tone of affected sympathy and patronage which festered in the heart of the young king, assuring him that his followers were at his own cost, and not at that of the State, and concluding his explanation by an offer of pecuniary aid, and a company of his regiment of Bussy-Zamet, which he had just brought from Normandy. Justly incensed by such an insult, Louis commanded him instantly to quit his presence; and he had no sooner withdrawn, followed by his glittering retinue, than the young monarch sank back upon his seat, and uttered the most bitter complaints of the affront to which he had been subjected.†

"And to this, sire," said De Luynes, as he stood beside his royal master—"to this insult, which is but the precursor of many others, you have been subjected by the queen-mother."

"I will revenge myself!" exclaimed Louis, with a sudden assumption of dignity.

"And how?" demanded the Favourite, emphatically. "You are called a king, but where are your great nobles? Where are the officers of your household? Where are your barons? So many princes, so many powers. France has no longer a king!"

"And my people!" shouted the excited youth.

"You have no people. You are a mere puppet in the hands of an ambitious woman and an unprincipled adventurer."

"A puppet!" echoed Louis, haughtily. "Do I not wear the crown of France?"

* Concini had formed a large establishment by engaging in his service a number of impoverished French nobles, whose necessities had induced them to accept a thousand livres a year, and to submit to the insults which were heaped upon them by their upstart patron. These poor gentlemen he arrogantly called his *coions di mille franchi*.

† Richelieu, "La Mère et le Fils."

"So did Charles IX," was the unmoved reply, "yet he died to make room for Henry III. Concini and his wife, sire, come from the same country as Catherine de' Medici. Isabeau of Bavaria was a mother, yet she preferred her lover to her son."*

"Enough, enough, sir," said Louis, clutching the hilt of his sword, "I will hear no more, lest it should make me mad."

De Luynes bowed in silence, he knew that the poisonous seed was sown, and was content to wait until it should germinate. He had not to wait long. The cloud was deepening over the head of Marie de' Medici and her favourites. As the great nobles murmured at the insolence and tyranny of the audacious Italian, their murmurs were echoed by the curses of the people, and in every murmur and in every curse the name of the queen mother was coupled with that of Concini and his wife. Even the marshal himself at length betrayed tokens of alarm, he never ventured to traverse the streets of Paris without a numerous retinue, and even so attended, he cowered beneath the menacing looks and gestures which he encountered on all sides. Again and again he urged Eleonora to leave France, but he urged in vain, and finally he resolved to take measures for securing a safe retreat in his government of Normandy, should he be compelled to escape from the capital. He endeavoured to purchase the governments of several other places upon the Loire and Seine, which, had he been enabled to carry out his object, could not have failed to render him independent of the royal authority. He also lavished large sums on every side, in order to secure partisans, and so excited the apprehensions of the citizens, that bitter complaints were made, and threats uttered against himself, his royal mistress, and the new ministry.

"What is to be done?" exclaimed Louis on one occasion, "the *Maréchal d'Ancre* has, as it would seem, undertaken the ruin of my kingdom, and yet I dare not expostulate with my mother, for I cannot encounter her rage."

This puerile avowal decided the measures of the confederates. Before the chamber of Louis was closed that night upon his confidential friends it was decided that the weapon of the assassin and the axe of the executioner should rid him of Concini and his wife, and that his mother should be banished from the court.

On the 24th of April, 1617, Marie de' Medici sat in a magnificent apartment in the Louvre, the profuse splendour of which would have shamed the boasted luxury of an Eastern harem, in earnest conversation with the favourite Concini. The splendid dress of the marshal was in striking contrast to the gloom and despondency depicted on his features, and his utmost efforts were insufficient to shake off the dark presentiment of evil that had taken possession of his mind.

"I am a most unhappy man," said the marshal, with a heavy sigh.

"You unhappy! Do you not stand on the very pinnacle of wealth and power? Have I not done all that is possible to make you the greatest in my kingdom? Would you still climb higher?"

"Climb! No; on the contrary, I already tremble lest I should fall from the height I have attained to my former insignificance."

"Who will dare to attack you, the mightiest in my realm?"

"I have enemies, many enemies——"

"Laugh their impotence to scorn!"

"They will calumniate me, *regina mia*—and you will believe them. And should you withdraw the sunshine of your favour, I shall fall still more rapidly than I have risen. Nightly do I dream of the fate of Robert Devereux, and fancy I see the Earl of Essex, as he fell from the height of his power to the depths of a dungeon."

"The Earl of Essex was an ingrate and a rebel; that will never be the case with Maréchal d'Ancre. Elizabeth of England was a fury——"

"Calumny has a thousand means of changing love to

hate Both the nobles and the people have sworn to effect my overthrow, they will invent a thousand accusations against me, you will at length believe them, and, like Elizabeth, offer my head as a sacrifice"

"Elizabeth gave her favourite a ring, and said to him, 'Though you should have sinned against me and against the law, show this ring, and I will forgive you' Take this ring, Concini, I give it you as a talisman against my anger, and should you have broken every law human and divine, show this ring, and I will forgive you"

Concini bent the knee before his royal mistress, kissed the hem of her robe, and took his departure

In the antechamber stood a captain of the royal guard, named De Vitry, attended by three soldiers

"A word with you, marshal," said the captain, as he made the usual military salute

"Well, what do you want?" replied the haughty favourite

"Your sword, you are my prisoner!"

"*A mi!* Your prisoner? At whose command?"

"By command of the king"

"Ridiculous! Where is your warrant?"

"Here it is"

"That is soon answered," said D'Ancre, as he tore the paper and scattered the pieces on the floor

"Soldiers, seize your prisoner!" cried De Vitry

"The first who approaches me dies!" said the marshal, as he drew his sword

"Fire, in the name of the king!"

The reports of the pistols drowned the last words of the officer, and Marshal d'Ancre fell to the ground, pierced by three bullets

"Thanks, friend," said Louis, the next moment, from a window of the palace, as he received the report of D'Ancre's death "I now feel that I am a king Marquis de Vitry, for the service you have this day performed, the king appoints you Marshal of France"

The body of Concini, which had been buried secretly and without ceremony beneath the organ in the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, was torn from its grave by the infuriated populace, who dragged it through the streets to the end of the Pont Neuf, where they hung it by the feet to one of the three gibbets which the Florentine had erected as a terror to his enemies.

"*Vive le Roi !*" shouted the exasperated rabble, "*à bas les Italiens !*" Then they took the body from the gibbet, and dragged it to the *Place de Grève*, where they tore it to pieces, every one being frantically desirous of possessing a piece of the "excommunicated Jew." Horrible to relate, these miserable fragments of mortality were publicly sold for money, and the ears fetched considerable sums. It is even said that the people so far forgot the feelings of humanity as to roast the heart upon the coals and publicly devour it. The mutilated remains of the corpse were burnt at the base of the statue of Henry IV. on the Pont Neuf, and the next day the ashes were sold to the curious by the ounce.

Thus fearfully and literally was kept the promise contained in the refrain of the popular song which embodied the sentiments of disgust and deadly hatred of the Parisians for the Italian *mignons*, when they first made their appearance in the capital in the train of Catherine de' Medici :—

"Italien, qui que tu sois,
Qui viens t'enrichir aux dépens des François,
Toi qui te sers de muguet parfumé,
Prochainement tu seras enfumé !"

The queen-mother, who evinced no pity for the fate either of Concini or his wife, in the course of a few days was exiled to Blois. The former ministers were recalled ; and Richelieu, involved in the disgrace of his patroness, Marie de' Medici, was deprived of his office and dismissed to his bishopric of Luçon.

Lapsing from the position which she had formerly held at court, Madame de Verneuil never reappeared there, but spent the remainder of her life either on her estate at Verneuil

or in her hotel at Paris, in such complete retirement that nothing more is known of her save the period of her death in 1633, when she had reached her fifty-fourth year.

De Luvnes, the king's favourite, immediately assumed the chief direction of affairs, a post, however, for which he was no better fitted than his predecessor Concini. His first act was to bring the unfortunate Marchioness d'Ancre to trial for complicity in the alleged treason of her husband, but as this charge could not be substantiated, she was next accused of having amassed wealth by unlawful means, and of having practised the arts of sorcery and magic in order to acquire preternatural ascendancy over the queen mother. In her house was found hard cash to the amount of 2,200,000 livres, besides jewels which were estimated at half a million, and on the body of Concini was found paper money to the amount of twenty millions, which he invariably carried about him. No better proof of witchcraft could be found against the Marchioness d'Ancre than that she wore an *Agnus Dei* round her neck, which her accusers chose to assert was a talisman. As she refused to confess her guilt, she was placed upon the rack, and bore its tortures in a manner that excited the unwilling admiration of her enemies.

When the president of the Parliament asked her what means she had used wherewith to bewitch the queen, she answered, with haughty firmness—

“My magic was the power which a strong mind has over a weak one.”

On the 8th of July, 1617, she was condemned to death, and burnt as a witch upon the *Place de Grève*. The entire property, both of Concini and his wife, was confiscated, and quickly found its way into the hands of the avaricious De Luvnes.

For more than a year and a half Marie de' Medici was kept in close confinement, but on the night of the 22nd of February, 1619, she escaped from a window of the Chateau de Blois, fled to Angoulême, and by the aid of the Duke d'Alençon raised an army and declared war against her son Louis XIII. advanced against her in person at the head of

his forces, but by the mediation of Richelieu the quarrel was amicably settled. On the death of the king's favourite, De Luynes, in 1621, she again returned to Paris, and took her place at the head of the Council of State. To strengthen her party she brought Richelieu into power, but that crafty statesman soon wrested the sceptre from her grasp, and became the virtual ruler of the kingdom. She now used her maternal influence, and every other means in her power, to overthrow the minister, but in vain—Richelieu having persuaded the king that she wished to place her youngest son, Gaston, on the throne.

On this charge she was arrested in February, 1630, and imprisoned in the castle of Compiègne, from which she escaped in the July following, and fled to Brussels, where she was met by Gaston, the Duke of Orleans, who raised an army, and on entering France, was speedily joined by many of the nobility, who were discontented with the tyranny of Richelieu. But his forces having been defeated on the 1st of September, 1632, at Castelnaudari, the cowardly Gaston made terms with Richelieu for himself, and abandoned his followers to the fearful revenge of the implacable minister.

From this time Marie de' Medici led a wandering life; driven from place to place by the unceasing intrigues of her enemy Richelieu, the once all-powerful queen-regent was often in want of the common necessities of life. In 1638 she took refuge in England, but even the hospitable shores of this country could not long afford her an asylum, and in 1641 she arrived, in a state of utter destitution, at Cologne.

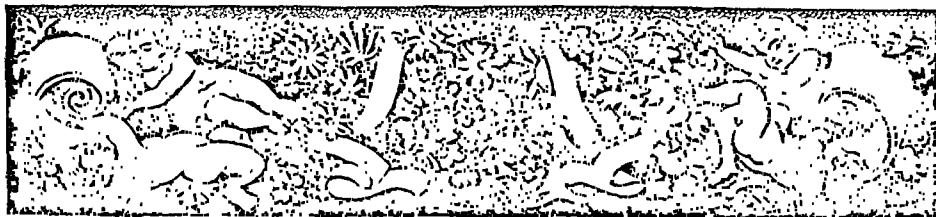
Here, in the fourth storey of a half-ruined house, which the painter Rubens had inherited from his father, and which was probably the birthplace of that artist, expired, in the seventieth year of her age, upon a wretched bed of straw, the haughty daughter of the Medici, the widow of Henry the Great, the brilliant regent of France, and the mother of Louis XIII. and of the queens of Spain and England, the patroness of art, the dispenser of honours, and the parent of a long line of princes.

The annals of European royalty probably do not furnish

a parallel instance of a life of greater vicissitude than that of Marie de' Medici. The whole career of this ill-fated queen is, indeed, full of startling contrasts. She who twenty years earlier had summoned Rubens to Paris, to decorate the Palace d'Orleans, and had loaded him with gold and honours, now homeless, hopeless, and heart-wrung, drew her last breath in a garret of the house of that artist, which had been formerly the chamber of one of his lowest domestics.

Thus miserably ended the career of another royal victim to the folly of favouritism—of a woman who was destined by Providence to experience the utmost extremes of wealth and poverty, of power and weakness; whose perversity and ambition twice plunged France into the horrors of civil war, and whose extravagance, and that of her unworthy favourites, reduced that kingdom to a state of prostration, from which nothing but the talents and energy of Richelieu could have retrieved it. But bitterly were her errors expiated. Numerous examples are to be found in history of queens who have suffered exile, imprisonment, and death; but we believe that the unfortunate Tuscan princess is the only authenticated instance of a total abandonment by her family and friends, which terminated almost in starvation. The sole redeeming trait in her character, probably, was a love for the fine arts, which she possessed in common with all the members of the illustrious house of Medici. The allegorical paintings by Rubens in the Louvre were executed by her commands; the palace of the Luxembourg was erected by her, on the model of the Palace Pitti at Florence; and many other public works attest her taste and magnificence.

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CHAPTER X.

THE FAVOURITES OF JAMES I. AND ANNE OF DENMARK.

I.

THE "BONNIE EARL" OF MORAY—ALEXANDER RUTHVEN AND THE GOWRIE TRAGEDY—THE FORTUNES OF THE PAGE RAMSAY—THE ENGLISH FAVOURITE, PHILIP HERBERT—RISE OF THE PRIME FAVOURITE, CARR.

IT would be difficult to point out two characters which, with certain points of resemblance, offer a more complete contrast than do those of Elizabeth and her successor. Both had favourites; but the spirit of the Tudors always preserved Elizabeth from the abject slavery in which James was bound to Somerset and Buckingham. The morals of the court of Elizabeth were not of the purest order, if compared with the standard which the admirable example of our beloved sovereign and her lamented consort have set up in our time; but in contrast with the profligate and degrading habits of the great lords and ladies under James, Elizabeth's courtiers were models of propriety.

A monstrous favouritism marked the whole of the reign of James I. and Anne of Denmark. The Danish consort of that royal pedant seems never to have had a spark of affection for him, from first to last of their married life. United to James in her fifteenth year, Anne, after a brief wooing, left the rugged shores of Norway to become the centre of a gaiety-loving court at Holyrood. Touching her personal appearance at this time, from the miniature of her attached to the insignia of the Order of the Thistle among the crown

jewels of Scotland, and also from a portrait at Hampton Court, taken apparently when she was about sixteen, there is reason to believe that in early youth her countenance was not uninteresting. That she was ever beautiful may be reasonably doubted. Peyton alone styles her "a body of a goodly presence, beautiful eyes, and strong to be joined with a prince young and weak in constitution—a union unsuitable for a virago to couple with a spiny, thin creature." Osborne says, "Her skin was more amiable than the features it covered, though not the disposition, in which report rendered her very *debonnaire*." Wholly given up to the pursuit of pleasure, she not only hated politics and formality, but "even the policy of propriety." Carte tells us that the petulant and violent-tempered young queen took great delight in making the king jealous. In this she soon too fatally succeeded. The first victim to her coquetry, if not to a worse passion, was the brave, handsome, and unfortunate Earl of Moray. The "bonnie earl" of the Scottish ballad was assassinated by his hereditary and deadly enemy, the Earl of Huntley—his life being sacrificed, it is believed, out of James's jealousy of the queen. The earl was commissioned by the king, on some absurd plea, to bring Moray into his presence. Moray was not exactly the man to submit tamely to be made prisoner by his feudal foe. A shot from his castle of Dumbriessel, in Fifeshire, killed one of Huntley's followers. The storming party became furious, and succeeded in burning the fortress. Moray, finding further opposition hopeless, tried to effect his escape by rushing through the flames, but, unfortunately, his long hair catching fire, it enabled his enemies to track him in the darkness to the rocks by the sea shore, amongst which he had hoped to find a hiding-place. He defended himself as long as he was able, but fell at last covered with wounds. Huntley, on the invitation of one Gordon of Buckie, joined in the bloody work, and, before their victim expired, stabbed Moray in the face, alighting from his horse to perform the dastardly act. The dying earl fixed his eyes on his hereditary foe. "You have spoiled," he said, "a better face than your own."

A well-known ballad makes interesting allusion to this attachment of the Danish princess :—

“Ye highlands and ye lowlands,
Oh, where have ye been ?
They’ve slain the Earl of Moray,
And laid him on the green.

“He was a braw gallant,
And he play’d at the glove,
And the bonny Earl of Moray,
He was the queen’s love.

* * * *

“Oh, long will this lady
Look o’er Castle Doune
Ere she see the Earl of Moray
Come sounding through the town.”

James, it appears, on his accession to the English throne, almost entirely separated himself from his ungovernable spouse. Peyton says, that though he sometimes visited her through compliment, he never “lodged with her a night for many years.” Yet he was ever anxious to impress his subjects with a notion of his uxoriousness. Osborne tells us, that on one occasion when he was present, James, before starting on one of his hunting expeditions, took a sort of public farewell of his queen—“taking leave of her at her coach side, by kissing her sufficiently to the middle of her shoulders, for so low she went bare all the days I had the fortune to know her.”

And so this ill-assorted pair were wont to occupy themselves with their separate amusements. Anne with her balls, banquets, and magnificent masques that made the “nights more costly than the days ;” and James with his drinking bouts and hunting matches, to the entire neglect of public affairs. A gluttonous, wine-swilling Solomon was Mary Stuart’s son, who, on being carried to bed in his cups by his attendants, would, between intervals of hiccuping, shout out whole pages of Livy, assert his claims to universal obedience, unlimited power, and divine appointment, until intoxication came to the rescue, and benignantly forced him to be quiet. Anne, too, was dissipated, thoughtless, extravagant, and had her favourites. But it was the more outrageous favouritism

in which James so pertinaciously indulged that eclipsed all his other follies, and proved the bane of his court and time.

In addition to his own inordinate expenses, the sums which James bestowed upon his favourites would appear incredible if their amount did not rest upon the most trustworthy authority. His early favourites were needy Scotsmen who had followed the court to England. Among these, a former page of the king, Sir John Ramsay, was most endeared to him by his services in stabbing the Earl of Gowrie, and thus saving his master's life, as he chose to assert at the time of the alleged conspiracy. The mysterious tragedy of Gowrie was a question very much agitated amongst the inquiring spirits of the day, and the general conclusion come to seems to have been that expressed by Sir Henry Neville in a letter to Secretary Winwood, in which he says, "Many are of opinion that the discovery of some affection between her [Anne of Denmark] and the Earl of Gowrie's brother, who was killed with him, was the truest cause and motive of all that tragedy." This was a very natural conclusion, for Anne of Denmark's gallantries were well known, and Sir Edward Peyton speaks plainly of Gowrie's brother, Alexander, as one of her lovers, while the murder of Moray by Huntley some years before, with the king's cognizance, if not by his command, had not yet been forgotten. The late John Pinkerton wrote a dissertation to prove that Alexander Ruthven was the sole author of the attempt, which, he says, in itself, was foolish and weakly conducted, but was designed to accomplish some object which he and the queen, whose favourite he was, had in view—"most probably an abdication of the government by James in favour of Prince Henry, and the queen's appointment to the regency."

An anecdote of the loves of Alexander Ruthven and Anne of Denmark is said to have been preserved by popular tradition. Learned, handsome, young, and active, Alexander had been made a gentleman of the bedchamber, and one of his sisters advanced to be a chief attendant upon the queen. One summer afternoon, it is told, James, strolling in the garden of the palace at Falkland, came upon Ruthven stretched

asleep on the grass, when his eye was immediately attracted by a rich ribbon about the young man's neck, a small portion of which glanced from under his ruff. It was one which his majesty had lately made a present of to the queen. He hurried off to find Anne, but one of her ladies who had observed what passed, and whose eye, hand, and foot must have been as nimble as her invention, running up to the sleeping youth, in an instant possessed herself of the ribbon, and, taking a nearer way of access, had the luck to get with it to her majesty's apartment before the king. She found Anne at her toilet, and had just time earnestly to entreat her to put the ribbon in a drawer, and slip away before James made his appearance. When, on his demanding to see the ribbon, the drawer was opened, and it was put into his hands, he looked at it with considerable surprise as well as attention for some moments, and then gave it back to Anne without a word of remark ; but as he staggered out of the room he was overheard muttering to himself, " Deil tak' me, but *like* is an ill mark ! " The words, which, however, were probably in common use in Scotland before this, as they still are, well hit off James's peculiar kind of sagacity, in which there was usually, at the best, more of ingenious speculation than of real insight.

Whatever the origin and motive of this dark matter of the Gowrie tragedy—which at the time astonished and confounded all Europe—it proved the stepping-stone to Ramsay's high fortunes. For no sooner was James firmly seated on the English throne, than he bestowed leases of crown lands, gifts, and pensions on the *quondam* page, whom he had newly created Viscount Haddington, besides discharging for him a debt of 10,000*l.*, contracted with a London merchant. The lucky favourite, in the language of the times, had " a good and gracious maker, in this terrestrial globe," being next well wedded, by the king's desire, to a daughter of the great Earl of Sussex, and a few years afterwards raised to the English peerage by the title of Baron of Kingston-on-Thames, and Earl of Holderness. James's folly in this costly favouritism provoked the indignation of the House of Commons, and

was one of the main causes that his laudable anxiety for a perfect union of the two kingdoms of England and Scotland was constantly defeated. In 1607, James, indeed, made a sort of apologetic speech in deprecation of these preferences:—"For my liberality, I have told you of it heretofore. My three first years were to them (the Scots) as a Christmas. I could not then be miserable. Should I have been oversparing to them, they might have thought Joseph had forgotten his brethren, or that the king had been drunk with his new kingdom."* But he added, "There is none left for whom I mean extraordinarily to strain myself."

How well he kept his word may be inferred from the riches which were obtained and lavished by Sir James Hay, who was afterwards created Viscount Doncaster, and Earl of Carlisle. This new favourite was called the Scottish Helio-gabalus, and first won the king's favour by giving him "a most strange and costly feast." Clarendon, who was not likely to speak with exaggeration in such a case, has left this character of Hay:—"He was surely a man of the greatest expense in his own person of any in the age he lived, and introduced more of that expense in the excess of clothes and diet than any other man; and was indeed the original of all those inventions from which others did but transcribe copies. He had a great universal understanding, and could have taken as much delight in any other way, if he had thought any other as pleasant and worth his care. But he found business was attended with more rivals and vexations; and he thought, with much less pleasure, and not more innocence. He left behind him the reputation of a very fine gentleman, and a most accomplished courtier; and after having spent, in a very jovial life, above four hundred thousand pounds, which, upon a strict computation, he received from the crown, he left not a house nor an acre of land to be remembered by."† The sumptuous ride to the Louvre, when Hay repaired to the French court on an embassy to Marie de' Medici, and

* Collet's "Parl. History," vol. I. p. 1104.

† Clarendon, "History of the Rebellion."

acted the magnifico, regardless of the cost, is quaintly described by Arthur Wilson :*

“The ambassador’s horse was shod with silver shoes, lightly tacked on ; and when he came to a place where persons or beauties of eminence were, his very horse prancing and curveting, in humble reverence flung his shoes away, which the greedy bystanders scrambled for, and he was content to be gazed on and admired till a farrier, or rather the *argentier*, in one of his rich liveries, among his train of footmen, out of a tawny velvet bag took others, and tacked them on, which lasted till he came to the next troop of *Grandies*. And thus, with much ado, he reached the Louvre.”

The other Scottish favourites were, like their royal master, equally lavish of their money, and though rapacious, were certainly not avaricious. But this “venal swarm on the watch for prey” did not long keep the southern land of promise to themselves, for James soon bestowed his good graces and broad lands upon English minions, to whom he was far more lavish than ever he had been to the Scots. As might be expected, heartburning jealousies and bitter feuds then prevailed between the Scottish and English courtiers. “There arose,” says Carte, “such a furious and universal discontent among them, that quarrels and assassinations happened daily between them, and some did not stick to cry out ‘there was as much need now of a *Scotch vespers* as there had ever been of a *Sicilian*.’”

For Haddington, who had slain the Earl of Gowrie with his own hand, to “switch” an insolent rival, was but a trifling exploit. The poltroon who tamely submitted to this gross insult without retaliation was James’s first English favourite, Philip Herbert, created Earl of Montgomery—the youngest son of that illustrious lady, “Sidney’s sister, Pembroke’s mother.” “The Earl of Montgomery,” says Clarendon, “being a young man scarce of age at the entrance of King James, had the good fortune, by the comeliness of his person, his skill and indefatigable industry in hunting, to be the

* “Life of King James.”

first who drew the king's eyes towards him with affection . Before the end of the first or second year he was made gentleman of the king's bedchamber and Earl of Montgomery . . . He pretended to no other qualifications than to understand horses and dogs very well, which his master loved him the better for, being, at his first coming into England, very jealous of those who had the reputation of great parts" It is rather curious that James, the most slovenly of men in his own person, should have been as fastidious as even Elizabeth touching the looks and dress of those who were about him . Of this scion of the noble Sidneys, contemporary writers speak with contempt, as possessing none of the chivalric qualities of his famous uncle, but more resembling the monarch whose favour showered honours upon him at the expense of his reputation . He seems to have been a sort of Squire Western—choleric, boisterous, illiterate, selfish, absurd, and cowardly . The Scottish favourite, Haddington, having become jealous at being supplanted by Montgomery, struck the English favourite across the face with his whip on the Croydon race-course, an insult which the English took up as offered not merely to the spiritless minion, who had not courage to resent it, but to the whole nation . Osborn, who is very bitter in his strictures on the manners of the court, thus alludes to the quarrel—"It was at a horse-race, where many, both Scotch and English, met. The latter of which did upon this accident draw together with a resolution to make it a national quarrel, so far as Mr John Pinchbeck, though a married man, having but the perfect use of two fingers, rode about with his dagger in his hand, crying, 'Let us break our fast with them here, and dine with the rest at London' . But Herbert not offering to strike again, there was nothing spilt but the reputation of a gentleman, in lieu of which, if I am not mistaken, the king made him a knight, a baron, a viscount, and an earl in one day, as he well deserved, having for his sake, or rather out of fear, transgressed against all the gradations of honour, for if he had not torn to rags that coat of arms, so often in my

hearing bragged of, and so staunch the blood then ready to be spilt, not only that day, but all after must have proved fatal to the Scots, so long as any had stayed in England—the royal family excepted. . . . And such of his friends as blame his youth for doing nothing, take away all excuse that could have been made for him had he done too much, since all commonly arrive at the years of valour before they can attain to those of discretion. This I can attest for the man, that he was intolerable, choleric, and offensive, and did not refrain, while he was chamberlain, to break many wiser heads than his own. Mr. May, that translated Lucan, having felt the weight of his staff, which, had not office and the place, being the banqueting-house, protected, I question whether he would not have struck again. . . . I have been told the mother of Herbert tore her hair at the report of her son's dishonour; who, I am confident, upon a like opportunity would have ransomed her own repute, if she had not redeemed her country.”*

To make amends for this disgrace on his name, James presently found a wealthy wife (Lady Susan Vere) for the cowardly earl, and loaded him with rich gifts to boot.

As long as Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, lived, no individual seemed to possess exclusively James's affections, and to monopolize the distribution of favours. The death of that powerful minister in 1612 allowed James to follow his own inclinations. He first selected Robert Carr, and afterwards George Villiers, as objects of peculiar attachment; and these, the creatures of the royal caprice and bounty, soon acquired the government of the king himself, and through him of his three kingdoms. The rest of his reign, indeed, presents a period of favouritism and injustice, for a parallel to which we must go back to the time of Edward II. and Richard II. James should have reflected on the dungeons of Berkeley and Pontefract when he devoted himself with such infatuation to his Carrs and Buckinghams. Robert Carr, afterwards Earl of Somerset, was another of the brothers of Joseph, whom Joseph did not forget. Osborn tells

* “Secret History of the Court of James I.”

a curious story of the ignorant lavishness of James. He had given Carr an order upon the lord high treasurer for twenty thousand pounds, but the treasurer apprehended "that the king was as ignorant of the worth of what was demanded as of the desert of the person who had begged it," and knew "that a pound, upon the Scottish account, would not pay for the shoeing of a horse, by which his master might be farther led out of the way of thrift than in his nature he was willing to go." The wise Cecil, according to the story, placed the twenty thousand pounds in specie upon the floor of a room to which the king was coming. "Whose money is this?" said James. "It was your majesty's before you gave it away." The king threw himself upon the heap, and scratching out two or three hundred pounds, swore that Carr should have no more, but Cecil, not caring to incense the minion too far, gave him the moiety of the sum originally intended.*

Robert Carr succeeded Cecil, not as prime minister, but became all powerful as prime favourite. Before the death of Cecil, the king's minions had not ostensibly influenced public affairs. Carr owed his brilliant fortune to accident. But his fall was as rapid as his rise, for after several years' exercise of all the insolence of power, he fell into disgrace on conviction of his concern in an infamous murder. In the autumn of 1607 there appeared at court in the suite of Lord Hay, a youth of "comely visage and proportionable presence, mixed with courtly grace," being "straight limbed, well favoured, strong shouldered, and smooth faced, with some sort of cunning and show of modesty." He was of the border family of the Carrs of Lermuchest, who had suffered severely in the cause of Mary Stuart, the king's mother, and his father was Sir Robert Carr, ancestor of the noble house of Lothian. When a lad he had been page to James, but on growing to manhood had gone over to Paris, according to the custom of Scottish gentlemen, in order to acquire in that centre of European fashion all courtly graces and accomplishments. He had just returned

* *Scots Tracts* vol. li p. 270

thence when Lord Hay, having a part to perform in a tilting match, sent his shield and device to the king, pursuant to the ceremonial of those pastimes, by Carr, who acted as his esquire. In dismounting from his horse to perform this duty, the animal, being "full of fire and heat," started, threw him to the ground, and his leg was broken by the fall. "This accident, being no less strange than sudden in such a place, caused the king to demand who it was; answer was made that his name was Carr. He taking notice of his name and calling to remembrance that such an one was his page, caused him to be had into the court."* The breaking of a leg, therefore, proved the making of a fortune. James, affected by his youth and beauty, had him tenderly carried into Master Rider's house at Charing Cross, sent his own surgeon to him, and visited him after the tilt. These visits were daily renewed; the youth gradually won the heart of the king, who resolved to make of him a scholar, a statesman, and a man of rank and wealth. The last was easy; to effect the former, he himself became his tutor in Latin and his lecturer in politics. "I think some one should teach him English, too," sneers Lord Thomas Howard, in a letter to Sir John Harrington† (then a young courtier, in whose advancement he was interested) — "for, as he is a Scottish lad, he hath much need of better language." As the king anxiously watched his recovery—"Lord!" exclaims Weldon, "how the great men flocked there to see him and to offer at his shrine in such abundance, that the king was forced to lay a restraint, lest it might retard his recovery by spending his spirits! And, to facilitate the cure, care was taken for a choice diet for himself and chirurgeons, with his attendants, and no sooner recovered but a proclaimed favourite." Thus solicitously tended by his kingly nurse, and consoled by rich presents and court appointments, Carr's recovery was rapid; so much so, that in the month of December, the chrysalis, casting off the

* "Truth brought to Light and discovered by Time," p. 268.

† "Nugæ Antiquæ."

grubby form of a page, which till then he had borne, burst forth in all the butterfly glory of a Royal Favourite. On Christmas Eve he was sworn gentleman of the bedchamber, and knighted. No suit, petition, letter, or grant from this time either reached or departed from the royal hand except through Sir Robert Carr; by which means, and the lavish gifts of his master, who bestowed upon him forfeited manors and broad lands, he had become so enriched in a short time, that early in 1611 he was created Baron Brancepeth, and then Viscount Rochester, and made a Knight of the Garter.

But neither Hay nor Carr appears to have meddled with the functions of a treasurer or secretary of state while Cecil lived. For four years after that minister's death Carr ruled supreme, till another favourite came to eject him. Justly does Mr. Carlyle say, "Somerset Ker, king's favourite, son of the Laird of Fernikerst, he and his extremely unedifying affairs—except as they might transiently affect the nostrils of some Cromwell of importance—do not much belong to the History of England. Carrion ought at length to be buried." Yet they cannot be wholly passed over. The "extremely unedifying affairs" of the court of James, as exhibited in the corruption of morals, had a great deal to do with the momentous events of the next reign. The disgust of the sober and religious part of the community drove vast numbers into the opposite extreme of religious fanaticism. Every civilization has given birth to its own morals and manners, as every flora expresses itself in its own bloom. Every crisis in history, every revolution, has had its counterstroke in the general manners of the people.

"Our great Viscount" now exercised a predominant influence in the cabinet, and though he held no official situation, transacted business as prime minister and principal secretary. Unequal to the task himself, Rochester, from the outset of his career, had the good sense to select a clever adviser in the person of Sir Thomas Overbury—an able and artful counsellor, but violent, capricious, and presuming. Though he had been banished from the court for an insult

offered to the queen, he was soon recalled at the solicitation of Rochester; but he could never obtain the good-will of the monarch, who continued to look on him as a rival in the affections of his Favourite, and the fomentor of the factions which divided his ministers, and of the intrigue, jealousy, and enmity which agitated his court. Overbury's prudence, however, kept his patron's bark steady before the wind, and his voyage might have been prosperous to the end had it not struck on the rock of illicit love.

On Twelfth Night, 1606, a masque was performed at court, of which Ben Jonson wrote the verses, and Inigo Jones superintended the decorations and machinery. This "Masque of Hymen"—that "delightful relic of literature and manners in the days of King James the First," says Amos—introduced to public notice a female of noble family, who became the heroine (if we may use this term in a bad sense) of the "Grand Oyer of Poisoning." The pageant was got up to celebrate the marriage of the Earl of Essex (the son of Elizabeth's unfortunate favourite), a boy of fourteen years, with Lady Frances Howard, daughter of the Lord Chamberlain Suffolk, a girl of thirteen. The elder of these *children* in after times commanded the Parliament's army at Edge Hill against the Cavaliers, headed by King Charles in person. The younger's career of guilty enjoyment, magnificence, crime, and degradation, we have now to narrate.

The flattering invocation, spoken by Hymen at the "altar of union," with which the masque opened—addressed to King James, who presided at the festivity, and who thereby evinced, as was intimated by the poet, his desire to unite hearts and hands as he had united kingdoms—is doubtless familiar to the admirers of that prince of masque-writers, Ben Jonson. An eye-witness passed a high eulogium on the mutual exertions of those two eminent characters, Jones and Jonson, who had not yet quarrelled about the precedence of their names in print. He speaks of a dance in the shape of the bridegroom's name: he admired the white heron plumes worn by the maskers; and says that all the jewels and ropes of pearls to be found in the West-end or

borrowed in the City were laid under contribution by the ladies of the court — therein, as Jouson insinuates, betraying their motives prepenſe.

“If not to mingle with the men,
What do ye here? Go home again.
Your dressings do confess,
By what we see of curious parts,
Of Pallas’ and Arachne’s arts,
That you could mean no less.
Why do you wear the silkworm’s toils,
Or glory in the shell fish’s spoils,
Or strive to show the grains of ore
That you have gather’d on the shore,
Whereof to make a stock
To graft the greener emerald on,
Or any better water’d stone,
Or ruby of the rock?”

Masque of “Neptune’s Triumph”

“Rare Ben” contrived another device for this Masque of Hymen, which subsequent events might lead us to characterize as prophetic of the disturbance that the marriage union he was called upon to celebrate was destined to undergo. He introduced eight maskers of the principal nobility, who represented the *Perverse Affections*. They were splendidly attired, and distinguished by several ensigns and colours, and they issued from a globe allegorically figuring a man, on which were exhibited countries gilded, with the sea heightened by silver waves, whilst the interior of the globe represented an illuminated mine of several metals. The maskers, or *Perverse Affections*, drew their swords, and offered to interrupt the marriage rites. These intruders were quieted by a venerable female, who advanced from the top of the globe, as from the brain of man. This allegorical personage was *Reason* — her hair was white, trailing to her waist, her garments blue with stars, and girdle covered with arithmetical figures — in one hand she bore a lamp, and in the other a bright sword.

But as *Reason* had been outraged by a ceremony in which neither bride nor bridegroom had attained the years pointed out by nature and dictated by prudence for contracting the marriage union, so no wedlock is recorded in English history

that led to consequences in which morality, law, and religion were equally violated for the indulgence of guilty and impetuous passions.

About eight years had elapsed since the representation of the "Masque of Hymen," when there was another masque in honour of the marriage of the same Lady Frances with Robert Carr, then created Earl of Somerset. The two noble Howards, the Earl of Suffolk, and the Earl of Northampton,* seeing that there was no possibility of checking the mighty rise of Rochester, sought to bind him to their family, and so share the better in the good things which the king continued to lavish on his Favourite. Suffolk's daughter, the most beautiful, the most witty, and the most fascinating young woman at the English court, was made the means of this heartless policy, and eventually of the downfall of him whom the king had so delighted to honour.

The young Essex had gone to the university immediately *after* his marriage, and thence to the Continent; and his child-bride—consigned to the care of her mother, who bestowed more attention on the ornamental than the moral education of her daughter—had lived amongst the seductions of a court, "incomparably the most disgraceful scene of profligacy which this country has ever witnessed."† Lady Suffolk was a woman of bad principles and tarnished reputation, and imbued with all the vanities of that vainest and most thoughtless of periods. "The court," says Arthur Wilson, "was her nest, her father being lord chamberlain; and she was hatched up by her mother, whom the sour breath of that age had already tainted; from whom the young lady might take such a tincture, that ease, greatness, and court glories would more distain and impress upon her than any wear out and diminish. And, growing to be a beauty of the greatest magnitude in that horizon, was an object fit for admirers, and every tongue grew an orator at that shrine." Her wit and repartee, her grace, elegance,

* Suffolk was the son, Northampton the brother, of Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, beheaded in 1572.

† Hallam, i. p. 342.

brilliancy, and exquisite beauty, were the theme of every gallant who had any pretensions to taste or fashion. Her mother was delighted at her success, and enjoyed her triumphs, and she herself, intoxicated at the homage paid her, lived in a paradise of vain-glory, and exulted to see the world at her feet. Amongst her many conquests, the most distinguished was Prince Henry himself, who, young as he was, and prudent and reserved, was said to be unable to guard his heart from the fascination of her smile.

In the midst of her idle exultation, encouraged and incited by her mother—the person of all others who should have foreseen its danger, and guarded her against it—the remembrance would sometimes intrude on her that she was a married woman, and that the time must come when her husband would return to claim her, but she dismissed the subject from her mind as quickly as she could, and allowed no consideration to prevent her career of gaiety and thoughtlessness. There were few examples at court fitted to teach her prudence, Queen Anne seemed to live only for amusement, and rumours of her former imprudence, when in Scotland, tended but little to rouse her character, add to which, the contempt she openly evinced for her royal husband and his unpleasant qualities, gave young Frances but small reason to respect the holy state into which her friends had betrayed her without teaching her its duties.

From the extreme youthfulness of this ill-fated pair, it was arranged, as we have said, that the boy Earl should pass the interval until his arrival at man's estate in foreign travel. This, reasonable as it appears, was probably in some degree the origin of their future misfortunes, for had Essex been constantly in the society of his young wife, she might have bestowed on him that ardent affection which, given to another whom to love was a crime—and unchecked, ungoverned by any principle—hurried her into an abyss which is fearful to contemplate. Not only was she separated from her husband, but she remained in the worst school, under the worst guide that could have been selected—at court, under the care of her mother, Lady Suffolk. That lady, herself a beauty,

avaricious, and unprincipled, was more than suspected of having bartered her favours for gold.* One of her occupations was the endeavour to find a young Englishman to occupy the post of favourite, the courtiers being extremely jealous of the favours lavished by James on the Scots. For this purpose she sought out handsome youths, dressed them up, curled their hair, and perfumed their breaths, and placed them in the way of the king, in the hope they would attract his notice.† Henry Rich,‡ afterwards Earl of Holland, was one of the youths on whose "curious face and complexion" James cast his eye with favour, but who, little as his character deserves esteem, is at least to be respected in this, that he scorned to accept so degrading a post. The manner in which he showed his repugnance to subscribe to the conditions necessary for the Royal Favourite was sufficiently marked. One day, after King James had lolled upon his neck and slabbered his face, Henry Rich, who could not restrain his disgust, turned aside from the king, and spat upon the ground.

What kind of lessons were to be learnt at court during this reign will be seen by some extracts from a letter of Sir John Harrington, "the witty godson" of Queen Elizabeth, to secretary Barlow, describing the entertainment given to Christian IV., King of Denmark, who visited London in 1606:—

"The ladies abandon their sobriety, and roll about in intoxication. One day a great feast was held, and after dinner the representation of Solomon, his temple, and the coming of the Queen of Sheba was made, or, as I may better

* Lady Suffolk, as well as her husband, received bribes for political services. "The Constable of Castile procured a peace so advantageous for Spain, and disadvantageous for England, there was not a courtier of note that tasted not of Spain's bounty, nor any in so large a proportion as the Countess of Suffolk; in truth, Audley End, that famous and great structure, may be said to have its foundation of Spanish gold."—*Secret History of the Court of James I.* Audley End was built by the Earl of Suffolk. In 1619 Lord S. was tried in the Star Chamber for speculation in his office of Lord Treasurer, and condemned to imprisonment, and to pay a fine of 30,000*l.*

† "Secret History," vol. i. pp. 375, 376. All these plans were upset by the accident of Carr breaking his leg.

‡ Henry Rich was second son of Lord Rich and Penelope Devereux, and godson to Henry IV. of France. He played a prominent part in the reign of Charles I.

sav, was meant to have been made, before their Majesties, by device of the Earl of Salisbury and others. But, alas ! as all earthly things do fail to poor mortals in enjoyment, so did prove our presentment hereof. The lady who did play the queen's part did carry most precious gifts to both their Majesties, but, forgetting the steps arising to the canopy, overset her caskets into his Danish majesty's lap, and fell at his feet—though I rather think it was in his face. Much was the hurry and confusion, cloths and napkins were at hand to make all clean. His Majesty then got up, and would dance with the Queen of Sheba, but he fell down and humbled himself before her, and was carried to an inner chamber, and laid on a bed of state, which was not a little defiled with the presents of the queen bestowed on his garments, such as wine, cream, jelly, beverage, cakes, spices, and other good matters. The entertainment and show went forward, and most of the presenters went backward or fell down, wine did so occupy their upper chambers. Now did appear in rich dress Hope, Faith, and Charity. Hope did essay to speak, but wine rendered her endeavour so feeble, that she withdrew, and hoped the king would excuse her brevity. Faith was then all alone, for I am certain that she was not joined by good works, and left the court in a staggering condition. Charity came to the king's feet, and seemed to cover the multitude of sins her sisters had committed, in some sort she made obeisance, and brought gifts, but said she would return home again, as there was no gift which heaven had not already given his Majesty. She then returned to Hope and Faith, who were both sick in the lower hall. Next came Victory, in bright armour, and presented a rich sword to the king, who did not accept it, but put it by with his hand, and by a strange medley of versification did endeavour to make suit to the king. But Victory did not triumph long, for after much lamentable utterance she was led away like a silly captive, and laid to sleep on the outer steps of the antechamber. Now did Peace make entry, and strive to get foremost to the king, but I grieve to tell how great wrath she did discover unto those of her

attendants, and, much contrary to her semblance, most rudely made war with her olive branch, and laid on the pates of those who did oppose her coming. . . . We are going on hereabouts as if the devil was contriving that every man should blow himself up by wild riot, excess, and devastation of time and temperance. The great ladies do go well masked, and indeed it be the only show of their modesty to conceal their countenance. But, alack! they meet with such countenance to uphold their strange doings, that I marvel not at aught that happens. I do say—but not aloud—that the Danes have again conquered the Britons; for I see no man, or woman either, that can command himself or herself. I wish I was at home. *O rus, quando te aspiciam!**

It is probable that the Prince of Wales, if he ever became a lover of Lady Essex, was a rejected suitor; and that in the absence of her liege lord she gave her whole heart to Rochester. The exceeding disparity of the various writers of this period as to dates and intervals of time renders it difficult to ascertain with any approach to exactness, when Lord Essex returned to England to assume his marital rights. It was probably in the summer or autumn of 1611. There is no proof of any criminality between Lady Essex and the young and handsome Scotsman up to that time; but doubtless they were then attached to each other, and the return of her husband hastened a declaration of their mutual feelings. It did more—it brought to maturity all the evil passions of her nature. Nevertheless she dissembled so well, that Essex ascribed to her “maiden bashfulness” all the coldness she evinced in return for his ardent love, and bore it for a time with the utmost patience and good-humour. He was at length, however, forced to call upon Lord Suffolk to use his influence with his daughter. At this crisis, Essex unluckily was attacked with the small-pox; and we may reasonably presume that the aversion felt towards him by his wife was not lessened by the disfiguring marks left by the disease. “Yet he,” says Arthur Wilson, the companion of

* “*Nugæ Antiquæ*,” i. 348.

his campaigns, "loved her with an extraordinary affection, having a gentle, mild, and courteous disposition, especially to women, as might win upon the roughest natures"

Lord Suffolk again interposed, and insisted that Lady Essex should accompany her husband to Chartley. She was compelled to obey, but, determined not to be defeated, she had recourse to a certain Mrs Turner, the widow of a doctor of medicine, whose prodigal and profligate life had brought her to want*. Lady Essex had two objects to attain, the one was to prevent the access of her husband, the other to maintain the constancy of Rochester. Escape from the hated tie that bound her to another may be supposed to have become the main object of her existence, and one to be compassed at any cost. There was at first some reason to hope that the state of the earl's health might rid her of him, but he recovered, at least to a certain extent, from the severe illness which seized him soon after his return home. Then, in her impatience, or desperation, she appears to have been induced to hope that sorcery might do something for her persons would not be wanting, as soon as her case came to be known or suspected, to put such a notion in her head. By the advice of Mrs Turner, one Forman, a reputed conjuror and quack doctor, was called in, who promised by his art to afford Lady Essex the assistance she desired. He made little figures of brass and wax resembling Lord Rochester, and the Countess, and the Earl of Essex, the former to be strengthened and united, the latter weakened and melted away. But he did not trust entirely to the black art, he supplied philtres and potions to be administered to the two noblemen, which were to work upon them physically, and it is quite possible with rather more effect than the symbols of brass and wax.

Once fallen into the hands of such confidants and auxiliaries, Lady Essex was lost beyond almost the chance or possibility of redemption. Every move she made involved her farther and more inextricably, every successive step in

* Mrs. Turner was celebrated as the inventress of yellow starch for ruffs, which became very fashionable.

her headlong course carried her down the declivity with augmented impetus. Infuriated by a mad passion until every womanly attribute departed, there was nothing that she would not soon be ready to do or to attempt. The powers of evil and of darkness had secure possession of their victim, and the vengeance of a fiend alone characterized her frightful career.

On arriving at Chartley, Lady Essex shut herself up in her apartments, entirely separating herself from her husband, whom, when she was compelled to see him, she received with reproaches and murmurs, calling him "cow, beast, and coward,"—terse, if not elegant language from a beauty in her teens ; all which he bore patiently for a long time, hoping thus to win her affections.

But the countess was already too deeply enamoured of the Royal Favourite and his splendid fortunes. The endeavours of her husband to please her, the influence of her father, mother, brother, were alike exerted in vain. Her passion for Rochester was as a hurricane, sweeping before it every vestige of decency and propriety, and was only strengthened by opposition. No crime now appeared too great, if it was to procure her the power of gratifying her lawless love. No secret guilt, no open shame, would now scare her.

While Lord Salisbury lived, he seems to have been a check upon all parties, from the king downwards. The great minister died on the 24th May, 1612, and almost immediately afterwards the connexion between Lady Essex and Rochester became notorious. In the giddy race of vanity, Robert Carr and Frances Howard kept side by side, and their goal was the same—self-gratification. Both, perhaps, might have been saved, if they had not been surrounded by spirits ever ready to encourage error and incite to wickedness. Neither of them had a Mentor near, and neither possessed natural good sense or moral feeling sufficient to conduct them out of the fatal path they were pursuing.

The Earl of Northampton, disgracing his rank, his learning, and his gray hairs, to gain the favour of the Favourite, became pander to the dishonour of his niece, and arranged

meetings for the lovers at his own house Essex, having discovered that her aversion for himself was caused by her passion for Rochester, had ceased to attempt any exercise of authority over her. The stolen pleasures of the guilty pair were uninterrupted, but they were stolen, and that slight restraint became very soon too grievous to be borne.

Northampton was again employed, and used his influence with James—who was also anxious to gratify his Favourite—to such purpose, that the king consented to further a dissolution of the marriage. Lord Essex was willing to aid in all ways that did not reflect dishonour on himself, and at length a sort of committee of the friends of both parties—being the Lord Privy Seal, the Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Southampton and Lord Knollys—sembled to consider how the proceedings for the separation should be carried on. The state of the law at that time made it a matter of great difficulty, and the affair of Devonshire and Lady Rich, in 1605, had created a very strong feeling, which was not yet forgotten, but it was at length arranged that the countess should present a petition, praying for a dissolution of the marriage, on grounds that could not much gratify the Earl of Essex.

It is not possible to go into the details of the case, the depositions and examinations may be found at length in the State Trials. Lord Essex appears throughout the whole of the proceedings to have treated the lady with far more tenderness and delicacy than she showed towards him, or in any way deserved. Indeed, the odious circumstances which attended the divorce of Lady Essex, that she might be bestowed on her paramour Rochester, brought equal disgrace in the eyes of the people, upon the king who urged the divorce in the most unkingly manner, and upon the Ecclesiastical Court which decreed it. The royal profligate, in pandering to an adulterous connexion, dared to tell Archbishop Abbot, who opposed the disgraceful process, "The best thankfulness that you, that are so far my creature, can use towards me, is to reverence and follow my judgment, and not to contradict it." Thus James, it will be seen, assuming the character of a divine and a jurist, and tram-

pling on the independence of a high court of justice, ultimately procured, by a majority of seven to five, a sentence declaring the marriage "utterly void."

When Carr became, after the death of Salisbury, the *de facto* minister, he called, as already stated, to his aid Sir Thomas Overbury. Entirely without morality, and alive only to his own interests, Overbury had not hesitated—on being not only taken as his chief counsellor and guide in his career of favouritism, but made the confidant of Carr of a passion he had conceived for the beautiful Lady Essex—to offer him every aid which he could devise to obtain her favour. Carr, though handsome and winning, had no talent for pleading his own cause; and Frances Howard was accomplished herself, and accustomed to homage from poets and men of taste. It was necessary to propitiate her by the graces of language, which her lover did not possess; and he therefore gratefully and eagerly accepted his friend's offers to exert all his literary abilities to charm her mind. Overbury, therefore, was employed to write letters, as if from the Favourite, setting forth his attachment in the most glowing terms; and so well did these compositions succeed, that the vain beauty imagined she had made a conquest of one of the most refined, learned, and elegant, as well as the handsomest of men.

It never seemed to have entered into the contemplation of Overbury that Robert Carr could really be so much the slave of a vicious woman, as he considered Lady Essex to be, as to desire to take advantage of her release from the bonds of her first marriage in order to make her his wife; and he was thunderstruck when the truth burst upon him. For, although the seduction of that lady was a business in which it was quite in his line to assist, the Favourite's subsequent scheme of marrying her did not at all accord with his Mentor's notions of policy or propriety. The Earl of Suffolk, Lady Essex's father, and her great-uncle, the Earl of Northampton, who was Lord Privy Seal, were at the head of a faction at court, which, till now, had been at open war with Rochester and his adherents. Besides all other objections to it, the proposed marriage, in reconciling his friend, or master, to the Howards,

threatened to destroy much of Overbury's present importance—perhaps to leave him exposed without protection to the revenge of the powerful enemies he had hitherto braved. He accordingly exerted his interest with Rochester in the most strenuous manner to turn him from his purpose, but in vain. Incensed at the resolution he found in his patron to carry his design into execution, he uttered the most furious invectives against the lady, and became completely off his guard with rage, denouncing every one who favoured the match without scruple, accusing the highest personages of secret crimes, which he threatened to make known, and, finally, professed his determination to throw every obstacle in the way of this disgraceful union.

II

MURDER OF OVERBURY—SPLENDID MARRIAGE OF SOMERSET AND LADY ESSEX—ADULATION OFFERED TO SOMERSET BOTH BY THE COURT AND CITY—A NEW FAVOURITE THREATENS TO SUPPLANT THE OLD—DISCOVERY OF OVERBURY'S MURDER—TRIAL OF THE EARL AND COUNTESS OF SOMERSET—FATE OF THE GUILTY FAVOURITES

BUT Overbury's intemperance led him too far, and he had not, bad as he professed to think her, appreciated to the full the vindictive character of her whom he had now made his bitter enemy. When all this came to the knowledge of Lady Essex, which it did through the enamoured Viscount, she is said to have offered Sir Davy Wood a thousand pounds if he would challenge Overbury and take his life in a duel. Sir Davy had quarrelled with Overbury, and the latter refusing to meet him in the field, Sir Davy meant to "give him the bastinado," which Lady Essex hearing, thought he would be a man fit for her purpose. To her offer he replied, that for all the gold in the world he would not be a hangman, nor take a Christian's blood, but if she would get Rochester's promise, under his hand, or given

before a witness, that he would, after it was done, set him at liberty, he would "give him the sooner knocks for her sake." The countess required time, and soon after sent to him to say that could not be; but that she would, on her life, warrant that he should be conveyed away in safety. To which he answered, "that he might be accounted a great fool, if, upon a woman's word, he went to Tyburn."

Another plan, therefore, was thought safer and surer. By this time, the lady's relations, the Howards, and especially her uncle, seem to have become almost as eager as herself to effect her transference from Essex to Rochester; the king, too, had entered warmly into the project, which recommended itself at once as gratifying to the Favourite, as promising to restore peace and quiet to the court, and to put an end to a state of things which had for some time occasioned his majesty infinite trouble and vexation. There is every reason to believe, however, that James really thought the marriage with Essex was one which ought to be dissolved; he may have been biassed in forming that opinion by his wishes and partialities; but it is to mistake his character to suppose that he would have taken the part he did throughout the business, if such had not been his sincere conviction. Nothing was ever to be made of him except by the tenderest treatment of that conceit of his own understanding, which was his weak or his weakest point. Here, then, was an officious, obstinate, perverse fellow, who, manifestly for his own ends, persisted in standing in the way of an arrangement in itself eminently reasonable in every point of view. As for Essex, the only party among those entitled to have a voice in the matter, who was opposed to the dissolution, there were various considerations which might plausibly enough be represented as putting him out of court; but, in point of fact, his opposition was not to the dissolution of the marriage, but only to the particular ground upon which it was sought to be dissolved—to the form rather than to the substance and effect of the judgment sought by his wife. That he and she should ever live together again was out of the question, whatever should come of her suit; it must in reality, therefore, have been

nearly as much desired by the one as by the other, that their nominal union should be put an end to. Overbury was certainly in possession of some secret by which he could have thrown a formidable obstacle in the way of the divorce. It is clear that he had threatened to take effectual means to prevent it. The getting rid of him became, therefore, a matter of the first importance. He was directed to make himself ready to set out on an embassy to Russia. On his spurning this bribe, however, and declaring that his majesty had no right to send him into exile, he was immediately committed to the Tower as guilty of a contempt of the royal authority. This was on the 22nd of April, 1613, a few days before the commencement of the proceedings for the divorce before the Court of Delegates.

Lady Essex was now triumphant, he whom she considered as her bitterest and most dangerous enemy was in her power, and the weak and vicious Favourite had entirely given himself up to her guidance, consenting to all she proposed, and offering no resistance to the most detestable projects. Sir Thomas was no sooner safely enclosed within the walls of the Tower, than the lieutenant, Sir W. Wade, by Rochester's means, was replaced by Sir Jervas Elwes, and one Weston, servant to the infamous Mrs. Turner, was appointed to be keeper of the prisoner. Weston was then sent for by Mrs. Turner, when Lady Essex asked him if he would give Sir Thomas a glass of water which should be sent him, and he should be well rewarded. Shortly after, his son, who was apprenticed to a haberdasher that served the countess with fans of feathers and other wares, brought him a glass of water of a yellowish and greenish colour. This he showed to the lieutenant, "who rebuked him Christianly, and he cast it into a gutter, and brake it"*. About a fortnight after, some of Rochester's servants came to inquire how Overbury did, and whether he would like tarts or jelly, which were sent him as coming from Rochester, and which Weston received orders from the countess not to

* Weston's confession. There are two letters in the State Paper Office from Lady Essex to the Lieutenant of the Tower, which she sent with wine and jelly for Overbury.

allow any person but Overbury to eat. In June, Rochester wrote to Overbury, enclosing a white powder, which he desired him to take without fear. "It will make you sick, but fear not; I will make this a means for your delivery, and for the recovery of your health."

Mindful, perhaps, of the old adage—"Dying vipers will bite"—Overbury's persecutors never allowed him to see any of his friends; from which it may be inferred that he possessed some secret which it was dreaded that he might divulge. Every article of his food appears, at one time or another, to have been drugged; but although he languished, his strength of body carried him on, and his enemies becoming impatient, a dose strong enough to do its fatal work was administered to him on the 14th of September, and the betrayed instrument of Rochester expired in the most fearful torments in his prison on the day before the sentence of nullity of the Essex marriage was pronounced. He was buried in haste and secrecy, without the commonest decency being observed.

The sentence of divorce, it may be observed, was couched in terms bearing as lightly upon Essex as possible; his marriage with the Lady Frances Howard was declared to have been and to be utterly void and of none effect; but he, as well as she, was expressly left free to contract any other marriage. It now remained for the guilty pair to enjoy to the utmost the seeming prosperity which shone upon them. Lord Essex, too happy to be rid of a woman who had for a time disgraced his name and tarnished the restored honour, too lately lost on the scaffold of his unfortunate father, willingly paid back the dower he had received with her from Lord Suffolk, though he was obliged to sell his estate of Benington, in Hertfordshire, to do so; and her future conduct concerned him no longer.

King James now exhibited as much fondness towards Frances Howard as she showed to her lover, and his favour procured her all the adulation she delighted in. She became, more than ever, the idol of his dissipated court; and the announcement of her intended marriage with the newly-

created Earl of Somerset, raised to that rank in order that he might be considered her equal, was received with acclamation. Magnificent preparations were made for the wedding, and the king undertook to give away the beautiful bride.

On St. Stephen's Day, 1613, King James, the queen, the heads of the church, and the peers and peeresses of the realm, were assembled in the chapel of the royal palace of Whitehall, to witness the marriage of the divorced Lady Essex with the king's Favourite. On that same day, in the same place, just eight years before, the king had given away the same bride to a husband whom he may be justly charged with having, in effect, himself divorced. The same king paid the expenses of the second wedding. The same dean of the chapel, a Bishop of Bath and Wells, performed both ceremonies. The bride, according to the language of a contemporary writer, was married "in her hair," that is to say, her hair (which was very beautiful and long) flowing in ringlets to her waist. To be married "in their hair" was the appropriate etiquette of that day for *virgin* brides. The historian Wilson, from being the companion of the Earl of Essex in his campaigns, and the constant inmate of his house, may be supposed to have expressed himself on this occasion according to the views and feeling of his much injured friend. He writes of the Countess of Somerset, that those "who saw her face might challenge Nature of too much hypocrisy for harbouring so wicked a heart under so sweet and bewitching a countenance." Nor were the arts fashionable at this time forgotten, they heightened the attractions of the triumphant woman. "All outward adornments," we are told, "to present beauty in her full glory, were not wanting," among the rest, yellow starch, "the invention and foyl of jaundiced complexions, with great cut-work bands and pincillies," were adopted by the unhappy Lady Somerset.

As if Robert Carr, too, had been a royal personage and the object of the nation's love, like the ill fated young prince whom it had just lost, the court of Whitehall and the City

of London equally thought it necessary to do homage to the man "whom the king delighted to honour;" and to the disgrace of both, the incense that was offered to the towering Favourite on the occasion of his marriage, is almost as revolting as the marriage itself. Bacon spent 2000*l.* upon "The Masque of Flowers," in which grave lawyers spoke the flattering words which were put into the mouths of hyacinths and jonquils. Donne wrote an Eclogue, the following lines from which Dr. Johnson designates as "the poetical propagation of light," and which he adduces as one of the most striking examples of the conceits to be found in the works of the poets belonging to what Dryden calls "the metaphysical school," of which Donne and Cowley were the leaders:—

"Then from those wombs of stars, the bride's bright eyes,
At every glance a constellation flies,
And sows the Court with stars, and doth prevent,
In light and power, the all-eyed firmament.

"First, her eyes kindle other ladies' eyes,
Then from those beams their jewels' lustre rise;
And from their jewels torches do take fire;
And all is warmth, and light, and good desire."

A nuptial sermon was preached by the Dean of Westminster; and one of his hearers tells us, what we might have conjectured, that, like another "soft dean" who "never mentioned hell to ears polite," the gist of the discourse was the commendation, to use the writer's own words, "of the young couple, glancing also at the praise of the bride's mother, whom he styled the *mother-vine*." Donne, in reference to Cupid's conquest over the favourite, writes:—

"Our little Cupid hath sued livery,
And is no more in his minority;
He is admitted now into that breast,
Where the king's counsels and his secrets rest."

The various ceremonies and "little sorceries" incident to marriages at court were doubtless observed on this occasion; and if the details had been preserved, we should have found that King James had strenuously exerted himself in flinging the bride's left stocking, sewing her up in the sheets, quaff-

ing sack posset, drawing through the wedding-ring, plying a *réveille matin*, if he did not also, as he did in compliment to Sir H Herbert and his lady, visit the newly-married pair before they rose from their bed. We are told by an eye-witness that the king and queen tasted hippocras and wafers in the chapel with the bride and bridegroom, and that gloves were liberally distributed, and in particular, that "a very fair" pair of gloves, *worth 3l*, was given to Secretary Winwood.

Though the marriage was celebrated on a *Sunday*, in the evening there was a "gallant masque of lords." On comparing the lists of the noble dancers, it will be found that four out of twelve maskers had danced in the Masque of Hymen at the former wedding*. Donne, in writing of the entertainments provided on the occasion, says—

"The tables groan as though the feast
Would, as the flood, destroy all fowl and beast."

And, by way of curious illustration of the current controversy regarding the truth of the Copernican system, which at that time Bacon disbelieved, and much later Milton doubted, he writes that Copernicus was borne out in his opinions by the general *movement* of men and things in honour of the Earl and Countess of Somerset.

The Corporation of London gave the newly-wedded couple a sumptuous banquet at Merchant Taylors' Hall, to which the whole court was invited, nine days after their marriage, and when the lady, wishing to go to the festival in great state, borrowed the four superb horses in which Sir Ralph Winwood, the Secretary of State, took pride, he begged her to accept them, as so great a lady should not use anything borrowed. In less than two years the same Sir Ralph Winwood was labouring to discover the suspected murderers of Sir Thomas Overbury. There was a grand procession of

* The masque of the second wedding is still extant, it was composed by one Campion who also wrote the masque for the marriage of the Palgrave with Princess Elizabeth. This successful rival of Ben Jonson is now less real or known than even Illy, Davenant, Shadwell, or Cibber, who pleased sovereigns better and were more munificently patronized by them, than their respective contemporaries, Shakspeare, Milton, Dryden, and Pope.

equestrians and equipages from Whitehall to the City, and London sent out its swarms to gaze at the courtly array, as it took its glittering way through the thronged streets. It was the evening of the day following Christmas, 1613, and the light of innumerable torches flashed on the jewelled vests and waving plumes of two lines of guests—one of ladies, following the gay and haughty bride; the other of lords, attending on the exulting bridegroom—as they threaded the mazes of the streets from the royal to the City halls, where they were received with such a welcome as should belong only to royalty. At the feast they were served by the most comely of the citizens, selected out of the twelve companies, who wore their “gowns and rich foins.” In the evening there was “a wassale, two masques, and a play.” Nor did the bride and bridegroom return to Whitehall till three o’clock the next morning.

The City Corporation, the East India Company, the Merchant Adventurers, the farmers of the Customs, vied with each other in the costliness of their marriage offerings. The queen gave silver dishes curiously enamelled. Sir E. Coke, the Chief Justice, presented a basin and cover of silver gilt; his lady a pot of gold. Another sycophant gave a gold warming-pan; another, hangings worth 1500*l.*; another, a sword worth 500*l.*, besides its workmanship of enamelled gold, which cost 100 marks; another, a cradle of silver to burn sea-coal; another, candlesticks worth 1000 marks; another, two orient pearls; another, a fire-shovel, tongs, pokers, creepers, and other chimney furniture, all of silver. The wife of a bishop presented the bride-cake.

For awhile all went “merry as a marriage-bell,” and the progress of the guilty pair was one continuous triumph. They were now, as they conceived, safe from every danger, for the witness of their dark crimes could threaten and reveal no more. The gratitude or policy of Carr at this time, when the king was, as he himself expresses it, “at a dead lift, and at our wits’ end for want of money,” induced him to make an offering to his royal master of twenty-five thousand pounds, which was graciously accepted.

The death of the Earl of Northampton—uncle to Frances Howard and her too compliant friend, who was thought to be more acquainted with her schemes, and to have forwarded them more than was consistent with the character of an honest man—made a change in affairs, and Lord Suffolk succeeded him as treasurer, while the place of chamberlain was filled up by the newly created Earl of Somerset, much to the annoyance and vexation of the queen, whose suspicions had never been set at rest respecting the death of her son, and who had always regarded the Favourite with an eye of envy and dislike.

A system of injustice and dishonesty was now established, which placed the whole power of the kingdom in the hands of the reconciled parties every department, high and low, was confided to their friends, or sold, without hesitation, to the highest bidder. "Thus," says Birch, "Lord Knolles was made Master of the Court of Wards without purchase, because he married a daughter of Lord Suffolk, while Sir Tulk Greville, for the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, gave four thousand pounds to Lady Suffolk and Lady Somerset."

For some time the wind of prosperity was in favour of this band of depredators, but, by their own means, their downfall was preparing. Sir Ralph Winwood was made, by the king himself, who appreciated his services, Secretary of State, and he, a friend of the queen, kept under and insulted by the aspiring Favourite, saw too clearly the game that was playing, and used his utmost efforts to remedy the evils caused by the corrupt management of affairs. Add to this, in the sale of offices, that of cup bearer had been obtained by George Villiers, one of the sons of Sir George Villiers, of Brokesby, in Leicestershire. This young stranger was all that Carr had been in his early youth, when his graces made such an impression on the king, and to beauty of person he added a polish of manner and a freshness of intellect which could not fail to please the sovereign. James was so enraptured with his new courtier, that he did not conceal the pleasure he took in his society, so much so, that the Earls of Bedford, Pembroke, and Hertford, before whom

he uttered his eulogiums, conceived at once a plan of making the young man a rival to Somerset.

These noblemen consulted together, and took the queen into their counsels, who, though she foresaw the danger of introducing a new enemy, who would probably become as powerful as the old, could not but acknowledge that the removal of the present tyrant was worth a trial. From this juncture the star of Somerset began to wane, and another and powerful party sprung up, attached to the rising fortunes of the new Favourite, which threatened soon to destroy the influence of the old.

When Somerset sold the office of cup-bearer to George Villiers, he appears to have forgotten that another might supplant him in the favour of a king who dwelt on "good looks and handsome accoutrements." The cup-bearer was a dangerous rival. Care and anxiety, and the gnawings of conscience, had greatly changed the once joyous, careless, and free tone of Somerset's character; and probably the king had begun to weary of him, even before he beheld his rival. The influence of Frances over her husband, he felt, had greatly weaned him from himself, and his assumption of authority disgusted him; while certain state secrets, of which the earl is supposed to have been the possessor, rendered him an object of fear.

The enemies of Somerset also laboured strenuously to set up Villiers as his rival; but James had formed a cunning plan of taking no one to his favour unless specially recommended by the queen, "that if she should complain afterwards of the *dear one*, he might make answer, 'It is along of yourself, for you commended him unto me.' " The task of gaining the queen was committed to Archbishop Abbot, and after long refusing she consented with these prophetic words—"My lord, you know not what you desire. If Villiers gain the royal favour, we shall all be sufferers; I shall not be spared more than others; the king will teach him to treat us all with pride and contempt."

Somerset saw that his power was decaying; he was aware of his master's caprice, and trembled for the consequences.

He was not so blind to his danger as Court Favourites have usually been, and taking the advantage of a moment's kindness, he threw himself at the feet of the king, told him he was beset with enemies, who would not fail to invent some crime which they would lay to his charge, and entreated him to grant him a free pardon, signed and sealed, for all offences which he might ever have committed. James had his own reasons for consenting to this bold request, and intended to have done so to the full, but the queen became aware of the scheme, and before the great seal was affixed to the document, prevented its taking effect.

The king wished the two favourites to live in harmony, but Somerset haughtily spurned the advances of Villiers. According to Weldon, the new cup-bearer waited upon the chamberlain, and told him that he desired to be his "servant and creature," and to take his court preferment wholly under his power, and Somerset frankly replied, "I will have none of your service, and you shall have none of my favour. I will, if I can, break your neck." "Had Somerset only complied with Villiers," continues Weldon, "Overbury's death had still been raked up in his own ashes." The court, therefore, was soon divided into two parties.

In the meantime a fearful discovery was going on. Some dark suspicions had long been whispered, but it was not till the latter end of July, 1615, that information accidentally reached some members of the Government that Overbury had been unfairly made away with. One after another witnesses appeared, proofs were found of the part that Somerset and his countess had played in the murder of Sir Thomas, and no doubt could remain of their guilt. Still, the chief object of the investigation—secretly carried on by his enemies—was not aware of the gulf beneath his feet, and imagined himself yet secure in the favour of his royal friend. The king's duplicity on this occasion is almost incredible, and is sufficient alone to show the character of James in its true colours, and cover him with obloquy, if almost every action of his life had not already done so. Somerset was with the king at Royston at the very moment when circumstances had

brought the guilt of Overbury's murder so near to the earl and countess, that James directed Chief Justice Coke to make out a warrant for their committal. The royal hypocrite was in the act of embracing the lost earl with the appearance of the utmost tenderness, when the messenger from the Lord Chief Justice came to arrest him. Somerset complained loudly of the indignity offered to the king by his being arrested in the royal presence, and exclaimed that never had such an affront been offered to a peer of England. "Nay, man," said the king, wheedlingly, "if Coke sends for *me*, I must go." He then hung about his neck, slapping his cheeks, saying, "For God's sake, when shall I see thee again? On my soul, I shall neither eat nor sleep until you come again!" The earl told him, "On Monday." "For God's sake, let me!" said James. "Shall I? shall I?" and lolled about his neck; "then for God's sake, give thy lady this kiss for me," doing the same at the stair's head, the middle, and the foot of the stairs. The unhappy Favourite departed; yet he was not in his coach when the king used these very words, which were repeated to Sir A. Weldon—"Now, the deil gae with thee, for I will never see thy face mair." This was at ten o'clock in the morning. About three in the afternoon the Lord Chief Justice arrived at Royston, and to him James complained that Somerset and his wife had made him a go-between in their adultery and murder. He commanded him, with all the scrutiny possible, to search into the bottom of the foul conspiracy, and to spare no man, how great soever. And, in conclusion, he said to Coke, "God's curse be upon you and yours if you spare any of them! and God's curse be upon me and mine if I pardon any one of them!"*

It needed not the king's exhortation to induce the Chief Justice to sift the matter to the bottom, and Coke, who had many motives besides the love of justice, was not idle. He had owed many previous obligations to Somerset, but he saw that the earl could never again be of use to him. He and

* Rushworth : R. Coke.

his brother commissioners took *three hundred* examinations, and a dreadful tissue of iniquity was speedily unravelled.

Somerset was committed to the Tower on the 18th October, 1615, Richard Weston having made a full confession, but the countess, being shortly about to become a mother, was for the time placed under surveillance. Sir Jervas Elwes, Turner, Franklin, and Weston, were convicted and hanged during the month of November. On the 6th April, 1616, we learn from Mr. Chamberlain that "the Lady of Somerset was committed to the Tower on so short warning, that she had scant leisure to shed a few tears over her little daughter at the parting, otherwise she carried herself every way constantly enough, saying that she did passionately deprecate and entreat the lieutenant that she might not be lodged in Sir Thomas Overbury's lodging."

Somewhat less than three years had elapsed since that gorgeous display of wedding gifts and entertainments already noticed, when, on the 21st and 25th of May, in the year 1616, a still more imposing spectacle occurred, in which the principal actors in the former scenes again engrossed the eyes and ears of the public. On the first of these days the Countess of Somerset, and on the second the earl, held up their hands in Westminster Hall, where all the nobles and courtiers of the realm, and a multitude of more humble bystanders, perhaps the very individuals who had formerly echoed their praises or joined choros in their epithalamiums, were now assembled to hear them answer upon the arraignments for the crime of murder. All places of public business and amusement were deserted during these proceedings, so intense was the curiosity thus excited. For not only was Somerset charged with the murder of his former friend, but Coke openly accused him of that of the Prince, and thus spread horror and consternation throughout the kingdom. The queen caught the alarm, and it was soon confidently asserted that a plot had been formed, not inferior to the Gunpowder treason, to poison her, her son, Prince

Charles, and the Prince Palatine, in order that the Princess Elizabeth might be married to a son of Lord Suffolk, the brother of Frances Howard.

The interest of the trials was increased by feelings of a superstitious nature; for at the previous arraignment of Mrs. Turner, whom the countess calls in a letter "sweet Turner," some mysterious articles were introduced which had been seized in the study of the noted astrologer, Dr. Forman. This magician is called by the countess, in a letter, "dear father," and she subscribes herself "your affectionate daughter." He supplied her with potions to chill the love of Lord Essex for her, and philters to kindle that of the Earl of Somerset. The articles consisted of enchanted papers and "waxen figures," a piece of human skin, and a black scarf full of white crosses. A roll of devils' names had been produced at Mrs. Turner's trial, just before a crash was heard from one of the scaffolds which were erected round the hall: this sudden noise, we are told, caused "great fear, tumult, and confusion among all the spectators, every one feeling as if the devil had been present, and was grown angry to have his workmanship showed by such as were not his scholars." There was also produced a list on parchment, written by Forman, signifying "what ladies loved lords" in the court. The Lord Chief Justice grasped this startling document, glanced his eye over it, and then insisted that it should not be read. People immediately said that the first name on the list was that of Coke's own wife, the Lady Hatton.

Writers, to whom every minute particular of these trials seems to have been matter of the deepest interest, relate that Lady Somerset wore a dress of "black tammel, a cypress chaperon, a ruff and cuffs of cobweb lawn." On taking her place, the countess "made three reverences to his grace and the peers." The Lord High Steward having explained the object of the proceedings, the Clerk of the Crown said, "Frances, Countess of Somerset, hold up your hand." She did so, and continued holding it up till the Lieutenant of the Tower told her to put it down. The indictment was

then read Whilst it was reading, a deadly paleness spread itself over her countenance—she trembled, and shed some tears At the part where the name of Weston, the actual perpetrator of the murder of Sir T Overbury, was first mentioned, her courage forsook her She put her fan before her face, and there, in horror and agony, held it, covering her face until the reading of the indictment was concluded On being called to plead, the countess, making an obeisance, answered, Guilty, “with a low voice, but wonderful fearful” When asked if she had any cause to allege why sentence of death should not be pronounced on her, she answered, “I can much aggravate, but cannot extenuate my fault I desire mercy, and that the lords will intercede for me to the king” This she spoke “so low, humbly, and fearfully,” that Sir Francis Bacon, then Attorney-General, who sat near her, was obliged to repeat the words to the Lord High Steward Sentence of death was then passed, but in passing it, the last named functionary told the beautiful but guilty woman, who looked faint, and sick, and spiritless, and trembled excessively, “Since the lords have heard with what humility and grief you have confessed the fact, I do not doubt they will signify so much to the king, and mediate for his grace towards you”

An eye witness observes, that the countess, upon her arraignment, “won pity by her sober demeanour, which, in my opinion, was more curious and confident than was fit for a lady in such distress, and yet she shed, or made show of, some tears divers times” Another eye witness writes, “The countess, after sentence given, in a most humble, yet not base manner, besought the Lord High Steward, and then likewise the rest of the lords, that they would be pleased to mediate his majesty on her behalf, for his gracious favour and mercy, which they promised to do, and then expressing her inward sorrow, by the many tears she shed, departed”

Camden records the universal commiseration of the spectators In those times, as on various occasions at the present day, and probably as long as human nature endures,

the sympathies of mankind for a spectacle of suffering humanity (especially in the instance of a lovely woman overwhelmed by contrition and fear of death) immediately presented to the eyes, outweighed in strength the sentiments of justice, and effaced the recollection of a crime marked by extraordinary malice and cruelty.

Lord Essex, the former husband of the countess, was present at her trial, but seemed purposely to keep out of public observation and the sight of the wife of his boyhood.

On the next day, the trial of the once powerful Favourite took place. The love of personal decoration, for which Somerset was remarkable, displayed itself in that attention to dress by which his early fortunes had been so much advanced. The earl appeared at the bar in the cloak and George, and other insignia of the Order of the Garter. He was further apparelled "in a plain black satin suit, laid with two white laces in a seam; a gown of orient velvet, lined with unshorn; all the sleeves laid with satin lace; a pair of gloves with satin tops; his hair curled." It was observed that his "visage was pale, his beard long, his eyes sunk in his head." Somerset pleaded "Not guilty" to the indictment thus solemnly opened by Serjeant Montague:—"My Lord High Steward of England, and you, my Lords, this cannot but be a heavy spectacle unto you, to see that man, that not long since, in great place, with a white staff, went before the king, now at this bar hold up his hand for blood; but this is the change of fortune—nay, I might better say, the hand of God, and work of justice, which is the king's honour." The prisoner, who displayed far more ability than he had ever been supposed to possess, maintained his innocence, and defended himself so ably, that the trial lasted eleven hours. The peers returned a verdict of "Guilty," and Somerset, when brought again to the bar, and asked whether he had anything to say why judgment of death should not be given against him, answered, "The sentence that is passed upon me must be just; I only desire a death according to my degree. My Lords the peers, I beseech you, as you have been the judges of this day, so you will be my

intercessors." Then my Lord Steward broke his staff, the court dissolved, and the prisoner was carried away.

Towards the concluding part of the trial, the dramatic effect of the scene was increased by a multitude of torches casting a glimmering light through the high and vaulted roofs of the hall, and making transiently visible the countenances of the judges, the councillors, the peers, peeresses, and the mixed audience that crowded the lofty scaffoldings. It was at this period that the Earl of Somerset commenced his defence. On various great occasions he had been set up as the idol to be admired of all eyes. He was still wearing the glittering ensigns of the highest order of knighthood, but was now pleading for his life. He had to exculpate himself from a charge of deep and mysterious malignity. His own wife had confessed her guilt. It was supposed by some that he would be overwhelmed by the consciousness of crime or the sense of shame. It was doubted whether he had abilities to make any impression on a public assembly. Suspicions were abroad that, in a moment of despair, he would make revelations that would cause the king to tremble on his throne. Repeated attempts were made, during the trial, by the Lord High Steward (Ellesmere) to shake his firmness, and divert him from indicating his innocence, by plainly telling him that his life would be spared or not, according as he made a confession or demanded a verdict. Nevertheless, as an eye-witness observes, "A thing worthy of note in him was his constancy and undaunted carriage in all the time of his arraignment, which, as it began, so it did continue to the end, without any change or alteration." Amidst the mixed expectations of the audience, the Earl of Somerset began a speech in which he displayed a resolution of demeanour and a flow of natural eloquence that might have become a suffering patriot. Among many of the bystanders he produced an impression of his innocence. Other orations have been spoken in the storied hall of Westminster, with the eloquence of which the earl's speech will not admit for a moment of being compared; but the assemblies which have filled its spacious fabric from its area to its roof were not, perhaps,

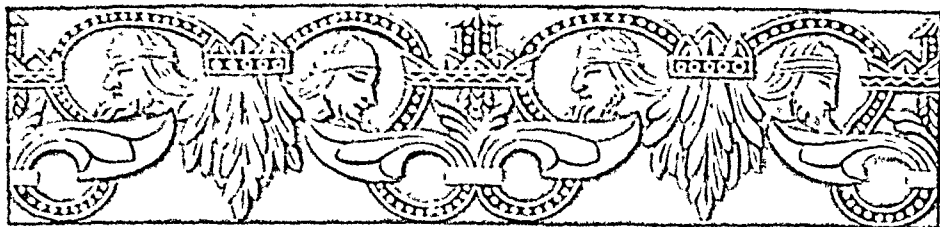
moved with more thrilling excitement, even by the voice of Strafford, or Burke, or Sheridan, than by the Earl of Somerset pleading for his life.

Though the inferior actors in this horrible tragedy suffered a merited punishment for their crimes, the two chief actors were pardoned—that is to say, the countess received a remission of her sentence on the 17th of July following; but that which was sent to the earl was refused by him. He was, he said, an innocent and injured man, and would accept nothing less than a reversal of the judgment. This could not be granted; and although he might have had his pardon, with all his jewels restored to him, and an allowance of 4000*l.* a year, Lord and Lady Somerset continued to live together prisoners in the Tower, until the 18th January, 1622, when the king, by order in council, set them at liberty, confining them, however, to either Grayes, or Cowsham, two houses of Lord Wallingford, in Oxfordshire, and a distance of three miles from either of them.

Dissatisfied with Buckingham, King James, in the last year of his reign, renewed his correspondence with Somerset, and gave him hopes of a complete restoration to favour. James also promised to restore Somerset's property, but died before he did so; and Somerset, vainly petitioning Charles to fulfil his father's promise, was reduced to great poverty and obscurity. Every spark of that passion which had led him to crime and danger was extinguished in his breast, and for the future he looked upon his countess as a fiend who had betrayed and ruined him. The love which had caused him and his wife, Wilson tells us, "to break through all restraints of decency or shame, declined in the private life to which they were condemned, until they loathed the sight of each other; and for long, though residing in the same house, they lived as strangers, and never met again." At length, in 1632, death put an end to her shame and her despair; she expired, after a lingering and painful illness, leaving one daughter, who was brought up in careful ignorance of the crimes of her parents. Anne Carr, at the death of her wretched mother, was young,

beautiful, and full of kindness and amiability. William Lord Russell, afterwards Earl and Duke of Bedford, became attached to her. His father, naturally averse to an alliance with the Somersets, desired him to choose a wife out of any family but that. Opposition only strengthened their attachment. The king sent the Duke of Lennox to Bedford, to intercede for the young couple, who at length consented, provided Somerset gave a fortune of 12,000*l.* with his daughter. To do this, the latter was forced to sell his house at Chiswick, his plate, jewels, and furniture; and the once rich and profuse Favourite, by thus reducing himself to complete poverty, secured the happiness of his beloved child, who married Lord Russell in 1637, and became the mother of that William Lord Russell who died on the scaffold in 1683. The dreadful antecedents of her parents' career had been so sedulously concealed from the knowledge of Lady Russell, that some time after her marriage she was found in a swoon on the floor, having read in a pamphlet an account of the frightful crimes of which her father and mother had been convicted.

The Earl of Somerset survived his wife until the year 1645: he was buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden. Such a trait as the sacrifice of all he possessed to insure the union of his daughter with the object of her affections, goes far to render the supposition probable that, but for his misfortune in meeting with Frances Howard, Carr might not have been so guilty as temptation made him. The Earl appeared both humble and penitent in his fall, and his charming daughter shines out amidst the darkness of his destiny, like a bright guiding star promising him forgiveness.



CHAPTER XI.

THE FAVOURITES OF LOUIS THE JUST (XIII. OF FRANCE).

I.

DE LUYNES—MADAME D'HAUTEFORT—MADemoisELLE
DE LA FAYETTE.

THE bold and startling *coup-d'état* which, by the destruction of the Italian favourites of Marie de' Medici, emancipated the youthful Louis the Just from their thralldom, only threw him, when he first grasped the sceptre, the more entirely under the sway of his own especial Favourite, Charles de Luynes. We will but glance, in passing, at the humble antecedents of one destined to play a prominent and brilliant part during a brief but very eventful period of French history. His father, Albert de Luynes, son of Guillaume Segur, a canon of the cathedral of Marseilles, and of the said ecclesiastic's housekeeper, having shown great courage and aptitude as an officer of the royal bodyguard of archers, obtained from Henry the Great the governorship of Pont-Saint-Esprit. His eldest son, Charles, began life in the modest career of a page in the household of the Count de Lude, who is said to have procured him a small pension for the support of himself and two brothers, and afterwards took him to court on the occasion of the nuptials of Henry IV. and Marie de' Medici. The sole inheritance of these almost portionless boys was a small dairy-farm, of the annual value of twelve hundred

livres. The young page induced the kind-hearted Count to receive his two brothers, who were almost totally without resources, gratuitously into his suite, in order that he might be able to share with them the four hundred crowns annually, which, together with his slender patrimony, formed his sole income. This favour conceded, the three young adventurers discarded the simple names of Charles, Honoré, and Leon d'Albert, by which they had been previously known, and assumed those of Luynes, Cadenet, and Brantés, from the field, the vineyard, and a small sand island beside them, which comprised their joint estate—"possessions," as Bassompierre facetiously observes, "over which a hare leaped every day." Poor as they were in worldly gear, the three brothers—bold, handsome, light-hearted, and enterprising lads—continued to exist, with considerable difficulty, as gentlemen; for it was notorious that at this time they had but one cloak—in those days an indispensable article of dress—between them; a circumstance by which two were compelled to avoid observation while the third fulfilled his duties. So little, however, were their services valued by the Count de Lude, that he was in the habit of declaring that they were fit for nothing but "to catch green jays:" a reproach they owed to their skill in dressing sparrow-hawks to take small birds, and to which he was far from supposing, when he gave it utterance, that they would ultimately be indebted for an advancement in life and a prosperity almost fabulous.

Such, however, came to pass. Charles de Luynes had not been long at court before he ascertained the passion of the young prince for falconry; and having carefully trained two of his miniature hawks, he caused them to be offered in his name to the Dauphin. Louis was delighted by their docility and skill, and desired that their donor should be presented to him. When he found that the page was deeply versed in all the mysteries of that sport to which he was himself so much attached, he thenceforward constantly commanded his attendance whenever he pursued his favourite pastime in the gardens of the Tuileries.

At this period De Luynes had already attained his thirtieth

year; and with admirable self-government, he had so thoroughly controlled himself as to disguise the salient features of his character. No one consequently suspected either his latent ambition, or the violent passions which he had craft enough to conceal; and thus the very individuals who were the objects of his hatred regarded him merely as a shallow and superficial young man, whose whole soul was centred in the puerile sports to which he had addicted himself.

It was not, however, solely to take small birds that De Luynes aspired, when he thus found himself the chosen companion of the Dauphin; he had other talents, which he exerted so zealously, that ere long he made himself indispensable. Gifted with a magnificent person, insinuating manners, and that ready tact by which an indolent nature is unconsciously roused to excitement, he soon obtained an extraordinary influence over his royal playmate, by the power which he possessed of overcoming his habitual apathy, and causing him to enter with zest and enjoyment into the pleasures of his age. Henry IV., who perceived with gratification the beneficial effect produced upon the saturnine nature of his son, and who was moreover touched by the almost paternal devotion of the page, appointed him to the household of the Dauphin, and augmented his income to twelve hundred crowns; and thenceforward he became at once the companion, the counsellor, and the Favourite of the young Louis; and at the desire of the prince, he was created *Maître des Oiseaux du Cabinet* (Master of the Royal Aviary).

Time passed on. The great Henry was suddenly struck down by the knife of Ravailiac—the Dauphin succeeded to the throne of his murdered father—the Regency tottered under the machinations of the great nobles and the intrigues and rapacity of the Italian favourites of the queen-mother. Cabals and conspiracies kept the nation in one perpetual state of anxiety and unrest; but the influence of De Luynes continued undiminished; and neither Marie de' Medici nor her ministers apprehended any danger from an association that was fated to produce the most serious consequences, while the

princes of the blood were equally disinclined to disturb the amusements by which the young monarch was so entirely absorbed as to pay little attention to the important events which succeeded each other about him

As he grew older, Louis became still more attached to his Favourite. His discontented spirit made him irritable under every disappointment, and vindictive towards those by whom his wishes were opposed. He detested alike explanation and remonstrance, and from De Luynes he never encountered either the one or the other. Under the remonstrances of his mother he became sullen, to the arrogant assumption of the princes and the Marshal d'Ancre he opposed an apathetic silence, which caused them to believe that it was unfelt; and it was only to De Luynes that he poured forth all his indignation, that he complained with bitterness of the iron rule of Marie, the insolence of his nobles, and the ostentatious profusion of the Italian, contrasting the first with his own helplessness, the second with the insignificance to which he was condemned, and the last to the almost penury to which he was compelled to submit.

No prince had ever a more attentive or a more interested auditor. The enemies of the young Louis were also those of his Favourite, and the eldest son of the old captain of the archer-guard being equally vain and ambitious, was consequently inimical to all who occupied the high places to which he himself aspired. Moreover, the poverty and powerlessness of the young monarch necessarily involved those of his follower, and thus both by inclination and by interest De Luynes was bound to share the antipathies of his master.

Like all favourites, moreover, he soon made a host of personal adversaries, while, as these were far from suspecting the height to which he was ultimately destined to attain, they took little pains to dissemble their dislike and contempt of the new minion, and thus, ere long, De Luynes had amassed a weighty load of hatred in his heart. To him it appeared that all the great dignitaries of the kingdom, although born to the rank they held, were engrossing honours which, possessed as he was of the favour of the sovereign,

should have been conferred on himself; but the especial antipathy of the arrogant adventurer was directed against the queen, the Marshal d'Ancre, and the President Jeannin. To account for his bitter feeling towards Marie de' Medici, it is only necessary to state that, blinded by his ambition, he had dared to display for the haughty princess a passion which was coldly and disdainfully repulsed, and that he had vowed to avenge the overthrow of his hopes.

His hatred of Concini is as easily explained, it being merely the jealousy of a rival favourite. As we have already observed, the Italian was to the mother of the king precisely what De Luynes was to the king himself; and as Marie possessed more power than her son, so also was her follower more richly recompensed. The President Jeannin was, likewise, especially distasteful to De Luynes, as he made no secret of his dissatisfaction at the frivolous existence of the young sovereign, and his desire that he should exchange the boyish diversions to which he was addicted for pursuits more worthy of his high station; while, at the same time, he exhibited towards the Favourite an undisguised disdain, which excited all the worst passions of its object.

Thus, insignificant as he appeared to those who were basking in favour, and who esteemed themselves too highly to waste one thought upon the obsequious dependent of a youthful and wayward sovereign, who suffered himself to be guided by those about him as though reckless of the result of their conflicting ambitions, it will be readily understood that De Luynes was laying up a store of antipathies, which required only time and opportunity to develop themselves, and ultimately bear the most bitter fruits; and already did the active Favourite begin to enjoy a foretaste of the coming harvest. Ever earnest for right, Louis XIII. never exhibited any personal energy to secure it, and consequently could effect nothing of himself; readily prejudiced, alike by his own caprices and by the representations of others, his very anxiety to act as became a monarch rendered him vulnerable to the intrigues of those whose interests tended to mislead his judgment; and as De Luynes, while sharing his su -

stitions acts of overstrained devotion, or amusing his idleness with the futilities of falconry and other even less dignified sports, did not fail occasionally and cautiously to allude to more serious subjects, the boy king listened eagerly to the recitals and opinions of his chosen friend, and finished by adopting all his views

This fact soon became so obvious to Concini, that the wily Italian, who dreaded lest the day might not be far distant when the son of Marie de' Medici would shake off the yoke of her *quasi* regency and assert his own prerogative, resolved to secure the good offices of De Luynes, and for this purpose he induced M. de Condé to restore to the king the government of Amboise, representing to the prince the slight importance of such a possession to a person of his rank, and the conviction which its voluntary surrender must impress upon the ministers of his desire to strengthen the royal cause. Let it not be supposed, however, that at the period of which we write, such a surrender could for a moment be brought about gratuitously, and thus, when the first prince of the blood was at length induced to yield to the representations of his insidious adviser, the terms of the bargain were fully understood on both sides, but even when he had succeeded in obtaining the consent of M. de Condé himself to the arrangement, Concini had still to overcome the scruples of the queen-mother, to whom he hastened to suggest that the vacated government should be bestowed upon Charles de Luynes

As he anticipated, Marie de' Medici was startled by so extraordinary a proposition. De Luynes was a mere hanger-on of the court, the companion of the boyish pleasures of her son, and without one claim to honour or advancement. But these very arguments strengthened the position of the Marshal. The poverty of the king's Favourite secured, as he averred, his fidelity to those who might lay the foundations of his fortune, and if, as the astute Italian moreover cleverly remarked, De Luynes was in truth merely the phlymate of the monarch, he possessed at least the merit of engrossing his thoughts, and of thus rendering him less desirous to control

or criticise the measures of others. Marie yielded to this argument; she had begun to love power for its own sake; and she could not disguise from herself that her future tenure of authority must depend solely upon the will of the young sovereign. In order, therefore, to secure to herself the good offices of one so influential with his royal master as De Luynes, she consented to follow the advice of Concini, who forthwith, in her name, remunerated M. de Condé, for his secession, by upwards of a hundred thousand crowns, and the grandson of Guillaume Segur, canon of Marseilles, became governor of the city and fortress of Amboise.

The rise of Charles de Luynes, therefore, from poverty and obscurity to an assured position at court was singularly rapid. In a few years, dating from his first appointment, he became Captain of the Louvre, June, 1615; Counsellor of State, November, 1615; Captain of the Band of Gentlemen in Ordinary, December, 1615; Grand Falconer of France, October, 1616, an office which he purchased from the heirs of André de la Châstaigneraie; and Master of the Royal Aviary, March, 1617. He had apartments in the Louvre. His influence became so great, that it cast a dark shadow across the path of the queen-mother's favourite Concini, and scared the confident Italian at the summit of his fortunes. With the bribe of the governorship of Amboise he had hoped to have got rid of the presence of his rival, but De Luynes refused to quit the court for the seat of his government; and Sauveterre, first valet of the king's chamber, foreshadowed the disgrace with which his friend was menaced, in remarking to the queen-mother in the presence of Concini: "You have then, madam, another favourite wherewith to provide the king, your son, of whom you would be more sure than of De Luynes; for that he must have one, you well know; and should you by chance choose one more enterprising and of loftier rank, you perhaps might repent of getting rid of the present favourite." Following this counsel, therefore, De Luynes was suffered to enjoy the royal presence unmolested, but he laboured, nevertheless, long and unremittingly to undermine the power of Concini. How the

destruction of the queen's Italian favourite was at length brought about by De Luynes, we have already shown in our narrative of the career of Eleonora Galigai and her husband, Concino Concini.

It was only a change of masters for the young Louis, and it left his Grand Falconer to reign in his rival's stead. "Never," says Voltaire, "did favourite further exert a predominating influence over a weak and irresolute mind, he obtained all he wished, or, to speak with more exactness, he accorded everything he desired." Ignorant as he was of all that concerned affairs of State, he hesitated not, however, to take the government upon himself single-handed. Immediately after Concini's murder, he gave proofs alike of his jealousy and his avidity. Desirous above all things to withdraw the king from the control of his mother, he retained her for fifteen days prisoner in her own apartments, prevented her from all communication with her son, save in writing, and caused her to be exiled to Blois. He next disembarrassed himself of one of her creatures named Travail, a priest initiated in all her secrets, in making him, under a false accusation, appear before the Parliament, by which he was condemned to be broken on the wheel. The same tribunal rendered him a more signal service. It cited the Marchioness d'Ancre to answer for heavier crimes, and, through the pressing solicitations of the all powerful Favourite, condemned her to the scaffold, and the reversion of her enormous treasures to the crown. Notwithstanding this latter clause, De Luynes easily succeeded in constituting himself her heir, but it was not without difficulty that he managed to appropriate the principal portion of the coveted wealth of his victims. Du Vair, with a firmness for which the favourite was not prepared, refused for a considerable time to indorse the letters of consignment which had been granted by the king to that effect, declaring that as the property of Concini and his family had been confiscated to the crown, it could not be otherwise disposed of. This difficulty, however, was surmounted after the fashion of the period, and the signature of the scrupulous minister was purchased by the rich bishopric of Luseux,

after which De Luynes of himself negatived the destruction of the magnificent hotel of the ill-fated Marshal, to which he transferred his own establishment, and then proceeded to enforce his claims upon the funded property in Rome. His pretension was, however, opposed by the Pope, who declared that all moneys confiscated within the Roman States must necessarily revert to himself; and Louis XIII., after having in vain endeavoured to induce the Sovereign-Pontiff to rescind this declaration, found himself ultimately compelled to make a donation of the five hundred thousand francs, claimed by his Favourite, to the cathedral of St. Peter.*

The Grand Duke of Tuscany, in his turn, refused to recognise the right of De Luynes to the funds which had been intrusted to him by the Marshal d'Ancre, but from a higher and a holier motive; as the young Count de la Péna was no sooner set at liberty, with an injunction immediately to leave France, than he received him with all the sympathy due to his unmerited misfortunes, and put him in possession of this remnant of his inheritance. Thenceforward the son of Concini remained in Italy until the year 1631, when he fell a victim to the plague.

The king and queen left Paris immediately after the queen-mother, and remained a fortnight at Vincennes; after which the king returned to the Louvre; where, instead of endeavouring, according to the sage advice of his ministers, to render the absence of his mother unfelt by the adoption of measures calculated to prove that he was equal to the responsibility he had been so eager to assume, Louis soon returned to the puerile amusements he had latterly affected to despise, and spent the day in colouring prints, beating a drum, blowing a bugle, or making *jets d'eau* with quills. On one occasion, when Bassompierre was complimenting him upon the facility with which he acquired everything that he desired to learn, he replied, with great complacency, "I must begin again with my hunting-horn, which I blow very well; and I will practise for a whole day."

"Be careful, sire," was the reply of the courtier; "I

* Sismondi, vol. xxii.; Le Vassor, vol. i.

would not advise your majesty to indulge too much in such a diversion, as it is injurious to the chest, and I have even heard it asserted that the late King Charles IX burst a bloodvessel on the lungs from his abuse of that instrument, an accident which terminated his life”

“You are wrong, sir,” said Louis, with one of his cold, saturnine looks, “it was his quarrel with Catherine de’ Medici which caused his death. If he had not followed the excellent advice of the Marechal de Retz, and resided with her at Monceaux, he would not have died so young”*

Bassompierre was silenced, and thenceforward resolved never again to mention the name of the queen mother in the presence of his royal master

In order to enlist the popular opinion in his favour, De Luynes had induced the king to recall the old ministers to power, and the people, still remembering the wisdom which they had displayed during their administration, welcomed with joy the reappearances of Sillery, Villeroy, and Jeannin in council, but although the favourite ostensibly recognised their privileges, he was far from pretending to permit their interference with his own interests, and so thoroughly did he enslave the mind of the young king, that while Louis, like a schoolboy who had played truant, and who, resolved to enjoy his new found liberty to the uttermost, was constantly changing his place of abode, and visiting in turn St Germain, Fontainebleau, Villers Cotterets, and Monceaux, without one thought save the mere amusement of the hour, De Luynes was multiplying his precautions to prevent a reconciliation between the mother and son—an event which must, as he believed, whenever it should occur, prove the ruin of his own fortunes. For this purpose, so soon as he saw a cloud upon the brow of the royal stripling, he hastened to devise for him some new and exciting pursuit, which might tend to deaden his remorse for the past, and to render him more conscious of the value of that moral emancipation which he had purchased at so fearful a price, but ere long even this subtle policy failed to dissipate the apprehensions

of the Favourite. Like all persons who occupy a false position, of which they fully appreciate the uncertain tenure, he became suspicious of all around him, and would not allow any individual, whatever might be his rank, to approach the king without his knowledge, nor to attempt to converse with him in private. Thus, therefore, while Louis fondly believed that he had indeed become a monarch in fact as well as in name, he was in reality more enslaved than ever.

De Luynes having thus obtained the most absolute power, not only over the king personally, but also over all State affairs—being anxious to strengthen his position yet more by a great alliance, after having for a time contemplated a union with the daughter of the Duke de Vendôme, ultimately entered into a negotiation for the hand of Mademoiselle de Montbazon,* daughter of Hercule de Rohan, Duke de Montbazon. This negotiation proved successful; and through her means he became closely connected with the most ancient and powerful families in the kingdom. The marriage took place on the 13th of September, 1617, and the bride was admitted to the honours of the *tabouret*; while, in order to render him more acceptable to the haughty houses into which the favour of his sovereign had thus afforded him ingress, the exulting favourite was elevated to a duchy-peerage, and took his seat in the Parliament.

Thus rapidly enriched and ennobled, De Luynes next caused himself to be appointed Lieutenant of the King in Normandy; and this was no sooner done than he entered into a negotiation for one of the principal governments in the kingdom. Carried away by the full tide of fortune, he appeared suddenly to have forgotten that one of the most cogent reasons which he had so lately given for the necessity of sacrificing the Marshal d'Ancre and his wife was the enormous wealth of which they had possessed themselves at the expense of the State. His ambition, as well as his

* After the death of the Constable de Luynes, she married Claude de Lorraine, Duke de Chevreuse, and became celebrated towards the close of the reign of Louis XIII., and during the minority of his successor, for her wit, her beauty, her romantic adventures, and her political intrigues. She died at a very advanced age in 1679.

avarice, became insatiable; and not contented with pushing his own fortunes to a height never before attained by a mere petty noble, he procured great advantages for his brothers, and lodged them in his apartments in the Louvre. But while Louis remained unconscious or careless of the new bondage into which he had thus fallen, the courtiers and the people were less blind and less forbearing. With that reckless light-heartedness which has enabled the French in all ages to find cause for mirth even in their misfortunes, some wag, less scrupulous than inventive, on one occasion, under cover of the darkness, affixed a painting above the door leading to the rooms occupied by the brothers, which represented the adoration of the Magi, beneath which was printed in bold letters, "At the sign of the Three Kings," a practical jest which afforded great amusement to the court.

Another and similar joke current at the time was the following:—The Duke de Bouillon, chief of the malcontents who had taken up arms on seeing that the successor of Concini governed in his master's name with the same despotism which had rendered the former favourite so odious, said openly on all occasions that "the court was the same wine-shop as ever, they had only changed the brand of their cork."

It must, however, be conceded that De Luynes, a man of subtle and far-sighted intelligence, having succeeded in becoming the depositary of the entire power of the sovereign, announced the fact by inaugurating an administration wise and firm enough to reduce to silence the most determined of his antagonists. In 1619 he obtained the liberty of Henry, Prince of Condé, who had been arrested by order of Marie de' Medici. By such stroke of policy he separated the cause of the princes of the blood from that of the Protestants, which rendered the latter more easily reducible to submission, and prevented them from putting in execution the plan which they had formed, since the death of Henry IV., of making France a federative republic, on the model of the German empire as it then existed. But the intrigues which De Luynes made use of to widen the breach between

Louis XIII. and his mother, together with his illimitable ambition and rapacity, soon alienated from him the respect of all Frenchmen. Notwithstanding his anxiety to secure the confidence and goodwill of the favourite, Richelieu had been one of the first to feel the effects of the hatred conceived against those who under any pretext adhered to the interests of the queen-mother. It is true that on leaving Paris he had pledged himself to watch all her proceedings, and immediately to report every equivocal circumstance which might fall under his observation. But his antecedents were notorious; he had obtained the favour of Marie de' Medici through the influence of the Marshal d'Ancre, and no faith was placed in his promise. De Luynes and his colleagues were alike distrustful of his sincerity; and only a few weeks after his arrival at Blois, an order reached him by which he was directed to retire forthwith to his priory at Coussay, near Mirabeau, and to remain there until he should receive further instructions. In vain did Marie de' Medici—who, whatever might be her misgivings of his good faith, was nevertheless acutely conscious of the value of Richelieu's adhesion—entreat of the king to permit his return to Blois; her request was denied, and the bishop had no alternative save obedience; nor was it long ere De Luynes induced Louis to banish him to Avignon.

Anxious to destroy any latent hope in which she might still indulge of a return to power, De Luynes resolved to effect the ruin of all who had evinced any anxiety in her restoration; and there was suddenly given to the council a commission "to bring to trial the authors of the cabals and factions, having for their object the recall of the queen-mother, the deliverance of the Prince of Condé, and the overthrow of the State." The first victims of this sweeping accusation were the Baron de Persan, the brother-in-law of Vitry, and De Bournonville, his brother, together with the brothers Siti, of Florence, and Durand, the composer of the king's ballets. The result of the trial proved the virulence of the prosecutors, but at the same time revealed their actual weakness, as they feared to execute the sentence pronounced

against the principal offenders, and were compelled to satiate their vengeance upon the more insignificant and less guilty of the accused parties

M de Persan was simply exiled from the court, Bournonville was condemned to death, but not executed. The three pamphleteers (for such were in reality the Siti and Marie Durand), whose only crime appears to have been that they had written a diatribe against De Luynes, did not, however, escape so easily, as the two former were broken on the wheel and burned in the Place de Grève, while the third was hanged.

Such a wholesale execution, upon so slight a pretext, aroused the indignation of the citizens, and excited the murmurs of the people, who could not brook that the person of an ennobled adventurer should thus be held sacred, while the widow of Henry the Great was exposed to the insults of every time-serving courtier. Nor were the nobles less disgusted by such an evidence of heartless vanity and measureless pretension. The Dukes of Rohan and Montbazou, despite their family connexion with the arrogant favourite, had already openly endeavoured to effect a reconciliation between Louis and the queen mother, and the other disaffected princes no sooner witnessed the effect produced upon the populace by the cruel tyranny of De Luynes, than they resolved to profit by this manifestation, and to lose no time in attempting the deliverance of the royal prisoner.

Instant measures were taken to this effect, and meanwhile, the favourite, lulled into false security, was wholly unconscious of this new conspiracy, believing that by his late deed of blood he had awed all his adversaries into submission.

The queen mother escaped in the night by a ladder from the window of her closet, attended only by the Count de Brienne, her equerry, a single waiting-woman, who carried her casket of jewels, and two other individuals of her household. It was not, however, without considerable difficulty that she accomplished this portion of her undertaking, as

at the last moment it was discovered that, from her great bulk, the casement would scarcely admit the passage of her person. Despair, nevertheless, made her desperate; and after several painful efforts, she succeeded in forcing herself through the aperture; but her nerves were so much shaken by this unlucky circumstance that, when she had reached the platform, whence a second ladder was to conduct her to the ditch of the fortress, she declared her utter inability to descend it, and she was ultimately wrapped in a thick cloak, and cautiously lowered down by the joint exertions of her attendants. The Count de Brienne and M. du Plassis then supported her to the carriage which was waiting at the draw-bridge; and thus Marie de' Medici found herself a fugitive in her own kingdom, surrounded by half a dozen individuals, possessed of no other resources than her jewels. They proceeded to Mont-Richard by the light of torches, and were there joined by D'Epernon and the Archbishop of Toulouse, under whose escort she reached Angoulême.

When the news of the queen's escape reached the court, De Luynes, who was obliged, in conformity with the king's wish, to enter into a treaty with her, offered, as the basis of his negotiation, that Marie de' Medici should abandon the Duke d'Epernon, and that he should be made an example of. It was at this period that Richelieu first laid the foundation of his power by his efforts to conciliate the king and the queen-mother, and an interview, which took place at the Château de Courcières, in Touraine, was the result of his ceaseless endeavours.

On his return to Paris after his interview with the queen-mother, Louis bestowed the government of Picardy upon De Luynes, who resigned that of the Isle of France, which he had previously held, to the Duke de Montbazon, his father-in-law. The two brothers of the favourite were created marshals of France; Brantés, by the title of Duke de Piney-Luxembourg—the heiress of that princely house having, by command of the king, bestowed her hand upon him, to the disgust of all the great nobles, who considered this ill-assorted alliance as an insult to themselves and to their

order—while Cadenet, in order that he might in his turn be enabled to aspire to the promised union with the widowed Princess of Orange, was created Duke de Chaulnes. The latter marriage was not, however, destined to be accomplished, Eleonora de Bourbon rejecting with disdain a proposition by which she felt herself dishonoured, nor can any doubt exist that her resistance was tacitly encouraged by Conde, who, once more free, could have little inclination to ally himself so closely with a family of adventurers, whose antecedents were at once obscure and equivocal. This mortification was, however, lessened to the discomfited favourite by the servility of the Archduke Albert, the sovereign of the Low Countries, who, being anxious to secure the support of the French king offered to De Luynes an heiress of the ancient family of Piquigni in Picardy, who had been brought up at the court of Brussels as a bride for his younger brother. Despairing, despite all his arrogance, of effecting the marriage of Cadenet with a princess of the blood, the favourite gladly accepted the proffered alliance, and M. de Chaulnes was appointed Lieutenant General in Picardy, of which province De Luynes was the governor, and where he possessed numerous fine estates.

As no chevalier of the order of the Holy Ghost had been created since the death of Henry IV, their number had so much decreased, that only twenty eight remained, and De Luynes, aware that himself and his brothers would necessarily be included in the next promotion, urged Louis XIII to commence the year (1620) by conferring so coveted an honour upon the principal nobles of the kingdom. The suggestion was favourably received, and so profusely adopted, that no less than fifty-five individuals were placed upon the list, at the head of which stood the name of the Duke d'Anjou. But although some of the proudest titles in France figured in this creation, it included several of minor rank, who would have been considered ineligible during the preceding reigns, a fact which was attributed to the policy of the favourite, who was anxious to render so signal a distinction less invidious in his own case and that of his relations,

while others were omitted, whose indignation at this slight increased the ranks of the malcontents.

Marie de' Medici was additionally irritated that these honours should have been conceded without her participation ; for she immediately perceived that the intention of the favourite had been to reserve to himself the credit of obtaining so signal a distinction for the noblemen and gentlemen upon whom it was conferred, and to render her own helplessness more apparent. As such an outrage required, however, some palliation, and De Luynes, moreover, being anxious not to drive the queen-mother to extremity, he induced the king to forward for her inspection the names of those who were about to receive the blue ribbon, offering at the same time to include one or two of her personal adherents, should she desire it ; but when, on running her eye over the list, Marie perceived that, in addition to the deliberate affront involved in a delay which only enabled her to acquire the knowledge of an event of this importance after all the preliminary arrangements were completed, it had been carefully collated so as to exclude all those who had espoused her own cause, and to admit several who were known to be obnoxious to her, she coldly replied that she had no addition to make to the orders of the king, and returned the document in the same state as she had received it.

The indignation expressed by the queen-mother on this occasion was skilfully increased by Richelieu, who began to apprehend that so long as Marie remained inactive in her measures, he should find no opportunity of furthering his own fortunes, while at the same time he was anxious to revenge himself upon De Luynes, who had promised to recompense his treachery to his royal mistress by a seat in the conclave ; and it had been confided to him that the first vacant seat was pledged to the Archbishop of Toulouse, the son of the Duke d'Epemon. In order, therefore, at once to indulge his vengeance, and to render his services more than ever essential to the favourite, and thus wring from his fears what he could not anticipate from his good...

faith, he resolved to exasperate the spirit of the queen mother, and to incite her to open rebellion against her son and his government

Circumstances favoured his project. The two first princes of the blood, M de Condé and Count de Soissons, had at this period a serious quarrel as to who should present the finger napkin to the king at the dinner table, Condé claiming that privilege as first prince of the blood, and Soissons maintaining that it was his right as Grand Master of the royal household. These two great nobles, heedless of the presence of the sovereign, each seized a corner of the *serviette*, which he refused to relinquish, and the quarrel became at length so loud and unseemly, that Louis endeavoured to restore peace by commanding that it should be presented by his brother, the Duke d'Anjou, but although the two angry princes were compelled to yield the object of contention, he could not reduce them to silence, and this absurd dissension immediately split the court into two factions, the Duke de Guise and the friends of the favourite declaring themselves for Condé, while Mayenne, Lougueville, and several others, espoused the cause of the Count de Soissons.

These successive defections greatly alarmed the favourite, who became more than ever urgent for the return of the queen mother to the capital, but a consciousness of her increasing power, together with the insidious advice of Richelieu, rendered her deaf alike to his representations and his promises. In this extremity, De Luynes resolved to leave no means untried to regain the Duke de Guise, and for this purpose the king was easily persuaded to propose a double marriage in his family, by which it was believed that his own allegiance, and that of the Prince de Condé, to the royal cause, or rather to that of the favourite, would be alike secured. M de Condé was to give his daughter to the Prince de Joinville, the elder son of M de Guise, while his third son, the Duke de Joyeuse, was to become the husband of Mademoiselle de Luynes. The marriage articles were accordingly drawn up, although the two latter personages were still infants at the breast, but when he took the pen

in his hand to sign the contract, De Guise hesitated, and appeared to reflect.

"What are you thinking of, Monsieur le Duc?" inquired Louis, as he remarked the hesitation of the prince.

"I protest to you, sire," was the reply, "that while looking at the name of the bride, I had forgotten my own, and that I was seeking to recall it."

De Luynes bit his lips and turned away, while a general smile proved how thoroughly the meaning of the haughty duke had been appreciated by the courtiers.

De Luynes now entered into a series of negotiations, having for their object the consent of the queen-mother to resume her position at the French court; but Marie, with a more fixed determination than ever, clung to the comparatively independent position she had secured, and thus rendered the negotiations useless. It was not, therefore, without considerable misgivings that, early in July, De Luynes accompanied the king to the frontier of Normandy, where it had been decided that he should place himself at the head of his army.

The success of the royal forces exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the young sovereign, and the discomfiture of the queen-mother's cause was so complete, that a treaty, signed at Angoulême, compelled her to accept such conditions as it might please her son to accord her. The favourite, in order to force his enemies into concluding a peace, knew well how to profit by the advantages obtained by the king's troops. The conditions of that peace, however, were not altogether satisfactory to his pride. Seeking in his personal interest, therefore, a pretext for reviving the office of Constable of France, vacant since the death of Marshal de Montmorency, he inveigled the veteran Duke de Lesdiguières with the promise of obtaining it for him from the king, and managed so well that he succeeded to the post himself in 1621—an object which he had long secretly coveted to attain. On the 2nd of April, Charles Albert, Duke de Luynes, therefore, was duly invested with the sword of the Constable of France; and thus in the short space of

four years, without having distinguished himself either as a warrior or a statesman, he had risen from the obscure position of a gentleman of the household, and the petty noble of a province, to the highest dignity which could be conferred on a subject.

The ceremony of his investiture was conducted with extraordinary pomp, and when he had taken the oath, De Luynes received from the hands of the king a sword richly ornamented with diamonds, which was buckled on by Gaston, Duke d'Anjou. The murmurs elicited by this extraordinary promotion were universal, and the rather as it had long been promised to the Duke de Lesdiguières who was compelled to content himself with a brevet of Marshal of France, and the title of Colonel General of the royal army, which constituted the veteran soldier the lieutenant of De Luynes, who had never been upon a field of battle.

Later in the year, the new Constable eagerly seized the opportunity of exerting his authority, and of showing that he was not wholly unworthy of the first dignity in the kingdom, in a campaign against the Protestants, and an army of forty thousand infantry and eight thousand horse was marched towards the Loire, at the head of which were the king himself, De Luynes, and the Marshal de Lesdiguières, while, as though the projected expedition had been a mere party of pleasure, not only did a crowd of the great nobles volunteer to swell the ranks of the already gigantic force, but the two queens, the Duchess de Luynes, and a numerous suite of ladies, also accompanied the troops, to share in the campaign. The result of this fearful contention is well known. The unhappy Protestants were driven from their strongholds, and with the exception of Montauban, which was so gallantly defended that the king was ultimately compelled to raise the siege, they found themselves utterly despoiled, and exposed to every species of insult.

No event could have been more unfortunate for the ambitious Constable than the successful defence of Montauban. Louis had begun to love war for its own sake, but he was not conscious of success, and he felt with great bitterness this

first mortification. He had, moreover, become conscious that he was a mere puppet in the hands of his ambitious Favourite; and he was already becoming weary of a moral vassalage of which he had been unable to calculate the extent. As the brilliant *Connétable* flashed past him, glittering with gold, the plumes of his helmet dancing in the wind, and the housings of his charger sparkling with gems, he looked after him with a contemptuous scowl, and bade the nobles among whom he stood admire the regal bearing of *le Roi Luynes*; nor was he the less bitter because he could not suppress a consciousness of his own inability to dispense with the services of the man whom he thus criticised.

The discontent of the monarch, and the failure at Montauban, for which De Luynes was held responsible, helped to revive the hatred of the courtiers against a favourite who knew no bounds, said they, either to his projects of aggrandizement, or his thirst for wealth. The king's mind once disabused, it easily occurred to him to remember that, in the brief space of three years, three considerable estates had been erected into duchy-peerages for that same personage and his two brothers, that the revenues and lands possessed by those three rendered them so powerful, that very soon the sovereign himself would be unable to curb them, if the safety of the State should render it necessary. The ambitious adventurer, having thus reached the summit of fortune and greatness, kept his eyes averted from the abyss that gaped in his path, until a premature death anticipated the downfall to which he was so rapidly hastening. Louis, conversing one day with a courtier, whom he had lately admitted to his familiarity, upon the insatiable cupidity of the Constable and his creatures, remarked, that "he had never seen any other individual possessing so many relations; that they came to court in shoals, but not one of them dressed in silk." De Luynes, Keeper of the Seals as well as Constable, thus uniting to the highest military rank the first dignity of the magistrature, thought to augment their individual grandeur by a sumptuousness which seemed an insult to royalty. The feeble monarch expressed his resolution to take vengeance upon the *ingrate*.

as he termed him, and never to rest satisfied until he had made him thoroughly disgorge all of which he had possessed himself. But the monarch's rage evaporated in exclamations and plaints attended by no result. Upon one point Louis XIII greatly resembled his mother, with all his arrogance and love of power, he possessed no innate strength of purpose, and constantly required extraneous support, but it was already easy for those about him to perceive that fear alone continued to link him with the once all powerful favourite. Rumour said, moreover, that superadded to the jealousy which the king entertained of the duly increasing assumption of the Constable, there existed another cause of discontent. The Duchess de Luynes was, as we have said, both beautiful and fascinating, and Louis had not been proof against her attractions, although his ideas of gallantry never overstepped the bounds of the most scrupulous propriety, the lady had on her part welcomed his homage with more warmth than discretion, and the favourite had not failed to reproach her for a liberty by which he considered himself dishonoured. Madame de Luynes had retorted in no measured terms, and the young sovereign, who detested to find himself involved in affairs of this nature, and who had, moreover, reason to believe that he was not the only individual favoured by the smiles of the attractive beauty, soon evinced a hatred towards both husband and wife, which encouraged the enemies of M de Luynes to hint that the reverse which his majesty had lately suffered at Montauban might be attributed to the incapacity and selfishness of the Constable. The opinion soothed the wounded vanity of the king, and he talked vehemently of his regret for the brave men who had fallen, among whom was the Duke de Mayenne, and bitterly complained of the dishonour to which he had been subjected, while, in order to avenge himself at once upon De Luynes and the duchess, he condescended to the meanness of informing the former that the Prince de Joinville was enamoured of his wife, and subsequently boasted to Brissac that he had done so. The Marquis listened in astonishment to this extraordinary communication, and, in reply, ventured to assure

his majesty that he had committed a serious error in seeking to cause a misunderstanding between a married couple.

"God will forgive me for it, should He see fit to do so," was the sullen retort of Louis; "at all events it gave me great pleasure to be revenged on him, and to cause him this annoyance; and before six months have elapsed, I will make him disgorge all his gains."

The rumour of his projected disgrace soon reached the ears of the bewildered favourite, who instantly resolved to redeem himself by some more successful achievement. He accordingly ordered the troops to march upon and besiege Monheur, an insignificant town on the Garonne, which was feebly garrisoned by two hundred and sixty men. As he had foreseen, the place soon capitulated, but the late reverse had rendered Louis less accessible than ever to the claims of mercy; and although by the terms of the treaty he found himself compelled to spare the lives of the troops, numbers of the inhabitants were put to death, and the town was sacked and burned. This paltry triumph, however, did not suffice to reinstate the Constable in the good graces of his royal master, who continued to indulge in the most puerile complaints against his former favourite; whose mortification at so sudden and unexpected a reverse of fortune so seriously affected his health, that while the ruins of the ill-fated town were still smouldering, he expired, in an adjacent village, of a purpurine fever, which had already caused considerable ravages in the royal army.

When intelligence of the decease of De Luynes was communicated to the king, he did not even affect the slightest regret; and the courtiers at once perceived that the demise of the man upon whom he had lavished so many and such unmerited distinctions was regarded by Louis as a well-timed release. So careless, indeed, did the resentful monarch show himself of the common observances of decency, that he gave no directions for his burial; and, profiting by this omission, the enemies of the unfortunate Constable pillaged his tents of their effects, and carried off every article of value, not leaving him even a sheet to supply his grave-clothes. T

Marshal de Chaulnes, and the Duke de Luxembourg, his brothers, with whom at his first entrance into life he had shared his slender income, and whom, in his after days of prosperity, he had alike ennobled and enriched, looked on in silence upon this desecration of his remains, lest by resenting the outrage they should incur the coldness of the king, and it is on record that the Abbe Rucellai and one of his friends alone had the courage and generosity to furnish the necessary funds for embalming the body and effecting its transport to its last resting place.

After the death of the Duke de Luynes, we find that though his confidant, Mêmes, was arrested and imprisoned in For l'Évêque, his brothers remained at court, enjoying a brilliant position. If De Luynes attained the dignity of Constable undeservedly, the art with which he laid the foundation of the towering structure of his fortune, amidst the powerful factions by which he was on all sides assailed, and over which he found a way to triumph without effusion of blood, authorizes the belief that such success was not attributable to chance alone, and that he could not have been destitute of superior qualities and talents, as his enemies and contemporary satirists have freely asserted. At all events, we may distrust the majority of the invectives launched against him, as emanating from men who were jealous of his power. In judging him by his actions, we are compelled to acknowledge that he rendered great and important services to the king, which Louis recompensed with as much justice as generosity. The "bird catcher" De Luynes had snatched France from the gripe of that cabal which, having opposed the grand projects of Henry IV., and brought the realm once more under that Spanish influence from which the royal soldier had with so much difficulty rescued it, had failed, it was believed, by compassing the assassination of the popular monarch. M. de Michelet goes so far, indeed, as to assert that De Luynes, by causing the Marshal d'Ancre to be struck down by Vitry, saved the king's life, which was threatened by the cabal. The voluminous correspondence of the Constable, preserved in the *Claqueau de Damiette*, in-

duces the conviction that he was faithfully devoted to the young king, and that his aim was to subject to royal authority all those who had broken away from it during the deplorable regency of Marie de' Medici—whether nobles, Protestants, or the queen-mother herself. In short, he began that difficult task which Cardinal Richelieu had the glory of achieving. Such a struggle, therefore, naturally excited against him the recriminations of his numerous adversaries. Moreover, both as regards his good qualities and his defects, anything of singularity is explained by the extreme facility of disposition which formed so remarkable a feature in the character of Louis XIII. There are but few favourites whose elevation, always envied or detested, offers absolute evidence for or against their personal character; all depending upon the sovereign who has served them as ladder and prop, together with the circumstances under which they lived. One historian has remarked of the famous Constable, that "he did a great deal of good for his friends, and very little harm to his enemies." This, after all, is but negative praise, for the French nation at that period needed a strong-handed minister of the calibre of Richelieu. Père Griffet seems to have pronounced a more equitable judgment upon the Constable—"So lofty a fortune, prepared and sustained with so much skill and conduct, was certainly not the result of chance, nor the work of a man devoid of merit."

II.

THE KING AND THE MAIDS OF HONOUR.

THOUGH the youthful Louis the Just was swayed in turn by female as well as male favourites, male influence undoubtedly exerted the strongest power over his moody and sullen disposition. It was said of the Constable De Luynes, that he was "master of his master, and king of his king," and that under his reign the title of Favourite became—to use the expression

of the President Hénault—a regular charge upon the State. But rapacity or self-aggrandizement, and love of power or pelf, cannot be alleged of either of the two virtuous favourites, Marie d'Hautefort and Louise Angelique de la Fayette, firmly as they attracted for a while the affections of their saturnine monarch—if, indeed, “affection” be not a sentiment too strongly emotional and warm blooded to be attributed to Louis XIII at any time. All the writers of that period have pointedly dwelt upon the scrupulous chastity of Louis the Just. It appears certain, however, that—his wife always excepted—the sight of a lovely woman charmed him, and that he delighted to converse unrestrictedly with her, and would listen graciously and attentively to all she said, keeping his solemn gaze meanwhile riveted upon hers. At first it was greatly feared lest the princess whom, through state policy, they had chosen as his consort, might sooner or later aspire to govern him, merely through gaining his confidence, and Richelieu, therefore, who perfectly agreed with the queen-mother on that point, early strove to bring about an estrangement between the royal pair, so that the singular spectacle was shortly seen of a husband caring nothing at all about his young and attractive wife, without, at the same time, even dreaming of being unfaithful to her. Anne of Austria had come to France as a bride of thirteen, and for the space of some three years the royal husband seems to have forgotten that such a person as his consort existed. In 1619, indeed, it was very fussily announced in the *Mercur*, for the especial gratification of all loyal Frenchmen, that the king had at length actually begun to court the queen. The Spanish ambassador wrote word to Madrid, in terms of the gravest importance, touching the slightest token of familiarity that passed between them, and everybody else, whether Frenchman or Spaniard, became engrossed with the stirring matter. It was a strange thing to see the ministers of two powerful monarchies working themselves into a perspiration with urging a husband and wife to throw themselves into each other's arms,—alas! with but very little success. The young couple, without any particular disagreement, were yet habitually estranged from each other.

Anne, surrounded by her Spanish attendants, spent her time in the enjoyment of the pleasures congenial to her age. According to her attached confidante, Madame de Motteville, she was remarkably handsome (which, judging from her portraits, we are inclined to doubt), but rather Austrian than Spanish in her style of beauty, with an abundance of light hair, which she wore in ringlets about her face. With pretty, delicate features, one defect was striking—her nose was thick and large; but the fair skin of this dynastic blonde endued her with a complexion of uncommon brilliancy. Haughty and choleric, and heedless of aught save the first trifle that came into her head, the giddy girl-queen turned everything into laughter. And it was her laugh especially that scared away the taciturn and melancholy Louis. On her arrival in France she retained, we are told, the national costume; and, discarding the tapestried chests which then stiffly enthroned royalty, made use of a pile of cushions as her seat. The Marquise de Morny (quoted by Madame de Motteville) described her on the occasion of her own presentation as reclining upon this Moorish sofa in the midst of her attendants, habited in a dress of green satin, embroidered with gold and silver, with large hanging sleeves looped together at intervals by diamond buttons, a close ruff, and a small cap of green velvet with a black heron-feather.

At once regal and elegant as such a costume must have been; and which her lady-biographer delights to expatiate upon, it is amusing to contrast it with those which she adopted in after years, when the most monstrous caprices were permitted at her court, and when it was by no means uncommon to see women of the highest rank, about to ride on horseback, present themselves in the royal circle in dresses reaching only to the knee, with their legs encased in tight pantaloons of velvet, or even in complete *haut-de-chausses*; while the habitual attire of the sex was equally *bizarre* and exaggerated. There were the *vasquines*, or rollers, which encircled the waist and extended the folds of the petticoats, thus giving additional smallness to the waist; the *brassards-à-chevrons*, or metallic braces, for expanding the sleeves; and the *affiquet*.

of pearls or diamonds coquettishly attached to the left breast, and entitled the *assassin*. Added to the absurdities, there were, moreover, bows of ribbon, each of which had its appropriate name and position: the *galant* was placed on the summit of the head, the *mignon* on the heart, the *favori* under and near the *assassin*, and the *badin* on the handle of the fan. Short curls upon the temples were designated *caraliers*, ringlets were *garçons*, while a hundred other vanities of the same description compelled the great ladies of the period to adopt a slang which was perfectly unintelligible to all save the initiated. And when we add to these details the well authenticated fact that the royal apartments were fumigated with powdered tobacco (then a recent and costly importation into France), in lieu of the perfumes which had previously been in use for the same purpose, it will scarcely be denied that caprice rather than taste dictated the habits of the court under Louis the Thirteenth.

The young princess had looked forward with eagerness to her first meeting with her intended bridegroom, whose grave but manly beauty so fully realized all her hopes, that, as she ingenuously confessed, she could have loved him tenderly had he possessed a heart to bestow upon her in return, but she soon discovered that such was not the case, and that King Louis saw in her nothing more interesting than a princess who was worthy by her rank and quality to share with him the throne of France.

This was a sad discovery for a lovely girl of fifteen, who had anticipated nothing less than devotion on the part of a young husband by whom she had been so eagerly met on her arrival, nor did she fail to contrast his coldness with the ill-disguised admiration of many of his great nobles, and to weep over the wreck of her fondest and fairest visions. But, young and high spirited, she struggled against the isolation of spirit to which she was condemned, and probably resented with more bitterness the coercion to which she was subjected by the iron rule of her royal mother-in-law, than even the coldness of her husband, to whom she had been prepared to give up her whole heart. Sober and simple in his habits,

hating pomp and pageantry, hunting and falconry were almost the sole amusements of Louis, and of which sports he was passionately fond—without, however, allowing them to render him unmindful of his regal duties. He was so skilful at a flying shot, that a certain facetious person, once making allusion to his sobriquet of “thè Just,” remarked with a sncer, “*Juste . . . à tirer de l’arquebuse.*” Too religious to have what is commonly called “a mistress,” he still coveted the possession of a woman’s friendship. The virtuous and high-minded Marie d’Hautefort was the first of her sex who held that pure relation towards him. Sprung from a good family in Guienne,* Madame de la Flotte Hauterive, her aunt, happening to be called to Paris early in 1629 on some matter connected with the court, where she held a post in the queen-mother’s household, carried thither her youthful niece, whose budding graces appear to have created the happiest impression in the gay circles of the metropolis. The very day after her arrival, indeed, Marie won such especial notice from the Princess de Conti, Louise Marguerite de Guise—so celebrated for her beauty, wit, and gallantry, and as the brilliant idol of Bassompierre, the author of “*Les Amours du Grand Alcandre*,”†—that it was a new pleasure to the somewhat jaded woman of fashion to make the fresh and charming provincial girl her companion on the promenade, and to watch everybody striving to learn the name of the lovely creature who so modestly peeped from between the curtains of her carriage window. In the court coterie that evening the beauty and grace of Mademoiselle d’Hautefort formed the chief topic of conversation, and very little difficulty was found in persuading the queen-mother to appoint her forthwith one of her maids of honour. Thus early, therefore, was

* Born in an old feudal chateau in Perigord, which in turn had belonged to Gui le Noir—to Lastours, called the *Great*, for his exploits in the Crusades—to the famous warrior-poet, Bertrand de Born—to Pierre de Gontaut and other illustrious personages of the Middle Ages, who had often served as ramparts against the enemy in the wars with the English in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. She was the daughter of Charles, Marquis d’Hautefort, and Renée du Belley.

† Under this feigned title the gay comrade in arms and minister of Henri Quatre narrated some of the more prominent love affairs of his gallant and good-natured king and master.

Marie "brought out" upon the glittering scene of that Parisian great world, in which, while hidden in her native bowers, she had so ardently longed to figure, and where she exhibited qualities ere long that made her loved, admired, and celebrated. A never failing amiability, combined with rare firmness of mind, a lively piety, guided by an unusual intelligence, a rather haughty demeanour, tempered fortunately by severe restraint, together served, in no slight degree, to enhance her precocious personal attractions. As classicism was then in vogue, she was called "Aurora," on account of her extreme youthfulness, innocence, and dazzlingly fair complexion.

In 1630 she followed in the train of the queen mother to Lyons, where the king had fallen dangerously ill, whilst Richelieu chanced to be at the head quarters of the army of Italy, and there it was that Louis XIII saw for the first time his mother's young maid of honour, and began to show her marked attention. Mademoiselle d'Hautesfort was then about fourteen years of age.

Of all men in the world, Louis XIII least resembled his father, the great Henry. Unlike that *grand gaillard*, as his loyal subjects delighted to term him, Louis the Just repelled the very idea of the slightest laxity in morals, and the facile beauties of the courts both of his mother and his wife—strive as they might—failed to obtain even a passing smile or glance from him. Still that scrupulously chaste and morbidly melancholy man felt the need of a sympathizing affection—or at least of some intimate friendship that should stand to him in the stead of all else, and console him for the never-ending weariness and vexation attendant upon royalty. The beauty, modesty, and intelligence of Mademoiselle d'Hautesfort alike impressed him. Little by little he began to feel that he could not dispense with the pleasure of seeing and talking with her, and when, on his return from Lyons after the memorable *Day of Dujes*, State interests and his firm allegiance to Richelieu compelled him to banish his mother from Paris, he withdrew the youthful Marie from her suite, and appointed her to that of his consort, the neglected Anne of Austria,—coolly begging her to love Mademoiselle d'Hautesfort,

and treat her well for love of him. At the same time he made Madame de la Flotte Hauterive lady of the bedchamber to the queen, in place of Madame du Fargis, who had recently also been exiled from court. Anne of Austria received, at first, with a very bad grace the present thus made her. She clung to Madame du Fargis, who, like herself, was of the party of the queen-mother, of Spain, and of the *malcontents*; and Anne looked upon her new maid of honour not only as a rival in the king her husband's affections, but as a spy and an enemy. She soon discovered, however, to what an extent she had done injustice to Marie's character. The peculiar feature of it, conspicuous above all her other qualities, and the foundation, indeed, of her mind, was a generous pride, half chivalrous, half Christian, which urged her to espouse the cause of the weak and the oppressed. Regal power possessed no seduction for her, and the slightest appearance of servility was revolting to her. The exquisite form of the girlish maid of honour enshrined a heroine's heart, which speedily manifested itself when occasion offered. Seeing her royal mistress unhappy and persecuted, that alone sufficed to rivet her attachment; and through inclination, as well as honour, she resolved to serve her faithfully. By degrees her loyalty, her perfect candour, her good sense, and singular gracefulness of demeanour combined to charm the queen almost as much as the king, and the favourite of Louis XIII. became likewise the favourite of Anne of Austria.

The first overt gallantry on the part of the king towards Mademoiselle d'Hautefort was shown at a sermon at which the queen, with all the court, was present. The maids of honour were, according to the custom of that period, seated on the floor. The king took up the velvet cushion upon which he knelt, and sent it to Mademoiselle d'Hautefort, in order that she might seat herself more comfortably thereon. The fair maid of honour, taken by surprise, blushed deeply, and her blushes enhanced her beauty. On raising her eyes, she saw those of the whole court fixed upon her; but she received the cushion with such modest grace, and at the same time with an air at once so dignified and respectful,

that the admiration of all present was plainly perceptible. The queen having made her a sign to take it, she placed it close to her feet, still unwilling to make use of it. Nothing more was wanting to draw down upon her yet higher consideration from royalty than before. The queen was the first to encourage her—seeing the evidences of so much esteem on the part of her husband, and so much virtue on that of her maid of honour—strange as such relations may appear—she insensibly became their confidante. The memoirs of the period abound in piquant details upon this, the first Platonic love of Louis XIII. Let us read what Mademoiselle Montpensier says—“The court was very agreeable at this time. The attentions of the king to Mademoiselle d’Hautefort, whom he endeavoured constantly to amuse, greatly contributed to make it so. His majesty delighted in the chase above all things, and we often shared that sport with him. Mesdemoiselles d’Hautefort, Chemerault, and Saint-Louis, the queen’s maids of honour, as well as Mesdemoiselles d’Escars (sister of Marie d’Hauteville) and Berumont, went with me. We were all dressed in uniform, and mounted upon handsome palfreys richly caparisoned, and as a protection from the sun, each wore a hat ornamented with a profusion of drooping feathers. The hunt was always arranged to take place in the neighbourhood of some pleasant country houses, in which great collations were found spread, and on returning, the king invariably got into the same carriage which conveyed me, with Mademoiselle d’Hautefort, home. When he was in a good humour, he chatted very agreeably with us about everything. Thrice a week regularly we had musical entertainments, and the greater part of the airs sung were of the king’s composition. He even wrote the words of some of them, and Mademoiselle d’Hautefort was ever their subject.”

These amorous strains of Louis XIII. have not come down to us, but there is a verse of another song by an unknown author, and which depicts, we think, gracefully enough, the fascination which Mademoiselle d’Hautefort exercised over the noody humour of her royal lover—

" Hautefort la merveille
Reveille
Tous les sens de Louis
Quand sa bouche vermeille
Lui fait voir un souris."

Perhaps, had Marie d'Hautefort not been as discreet as she was beautiful, the monarch's love would not have been very dangerous to her. He chatted with her in the queen's saloon of an evening, but his talk for the most part was about dogs, birds, and sporting ; and timorous of her and timorous of himself, he scarcely dared approach her side for conversation. It is related that on one occasion, having entered the queen's apartment unexpectedly, and finding Mademoiselle d'Hautefort with a letter in her hand, which had just been brought her, he begged to be allowed to see the missive. She did not care to comply with the royal request, because it contained some joke upon the novel favouritism of which she was the object, and to conceal it, thrust the billet into her bosom ; whereupon the queen jokingly seized her by both hands, and called to the king to take it from its hiding-place. As Louis did not venture to use his hand for the purpose, he took up a pair of silver tongs from the fire-grate, with a view of endeavouring to seize the billet with them ; but its fair owner had thrust it in too far ; and he could not get at it. The queen let go her hands with a hearty laugh at the mutual timidity of her grave husband and her prim maid of honour. But it was perhaps exactly because her prudence placed her beyond even a shadow of suspicion that the young *dame d'atours* of Anne of Austria could thus divert herself in the presence of her royal mistress by defying a prince so scrupulously chaste, and whose first impulse under such trying circumstances was, says Montglat, " to draw back his hands as it were from fire."

The distrust of the wary Cardinal was not so easily lulled as that of the young queen ; far from it. The good understanding between the Favourite and the Consort of the monarch, in whose name he solely governed the State, gave

him to apprehend a pact, by means of which his despotism might be menaced

In order, therefore, to detach Louis from his new confidante, he whispered in his ear the insinuation that Mademoiselle d'Hautefort, not satisfied with contradicting and rallying him to his face, joined the queen in secretly ridiculing him—an accusation that was not, indeed, altogether unfounded. At the same time he set his creatures to extol Mademoiselle de la Fayette, another of the queen's maids of honour, to the king. This manœuvre succeeded. Louis, to pique Mademoiselle d'Hautefort, paid marked attention to Mademoiselle de la Fayette, who was her inferior on the score of brilliancy, beauty, and intellect, but her superior, probably, in the endowments of heart and character.

Marie d'Hautefort was a dazzling blonde, precociously invested with charms the most formidable. Louise Angelique de la Fayette was a delicate brunette. If she could not boast of the lofty carriage of her companion maid of honour, if she did not command equal admiration, she ingratiated herself, slowly but surely, by a most winning gentleness and meekness. In the place of vivacity and gracefulness, she possessed judgment and firmness, with a heart inclined to tenderness, but defended by a sincere piety. Certain persons who enjoyed a portion of the king's confidence—cragging courtiers, like Saint Simon, for instance, who was a kind of favourite of the king to a certain extent, and who had made a sort of pact with the minister, and thought only of pleasing him, and several others also (among whom has been included, rightly or wrongly, the uncle even of Mademoiselle de la Fayette, the reverend Bishop of Limoges)—induced Louis XIII to single out for his peculiar attention the youthful Louise Angelique, by their perpetual praise of her singular merits. At length, Mademoiselle de la Fayette began also to be flattered by the sovereign's condescension and homage, but when he opened his heart to her, and disclosed all its inmost sorrows, its profound weariness and the grandeur of royalty, when she beheld one of the most powerful monarchs of Europe more wretched than

the lowest of his subjects, she could not refrain from a tender compassion, and, entering into his troubles, strove to mitigate them by her feminine sympathy. The king, finding himself at his ease for the first time in his life with a woman, revealed all the better qualities of his nature—what there lurked in him of intellect, of sterling truthfulness, and good intention; and he tasted at last of that peace and serenity which flow so abundantly from a reciprocal affection. It is not very surprising, therefore, to find that this intimacy ended in Mademoiselle de la Fayette loving, but with only a sisterly love, Louis XIII. This intimacy lasted for two years, until 1637, undeviatingly noble, touching, and truly admirable throughout. Mademoiselle de la Fayette resembles Mademoiselle de la Vallière, but La Vallière before she had fallen. Louis the Just, it is true, was neither so dangerous nor so impetuous as Louis XIV. On one occasion, however, overcome by her tenderness, and by the necessity he felt for seeing her at any time, he entreated her to allow him to instal her at Versailles, there to be wholly devoted to him. That entreaty alarmed the virtue of the young girl—a veritable maiden of honour—and warned her of the danger she was incurring. Louis never renewed the proposal that had momentarily escaped him; but Mademoiselle de la Fayette did not forget it, and she resolved to put an end to a difficult position in a manner equally worthy of the monarch and of herself. Louise Angelique determined to take the veil. Nevertheless, she relaxed not in her endeavours to bring about a reconciliation between the king and queen, and to loosen the yoke of Richelieu. Thus, while all without exception, from Mathieu Molé, the chancellor, up to Monsieur the king's brother, bowed and trembled before the imperious Cardinal, two young girls, without fortune, and placed almost within his grasp, resisted him. In vain he strove to gain over Mademoiselle de la Fayette; he succeeded no better with her than with Mademoiselle d'Haute-
fort. He then had recourse to his customary manœuvres: he fomented the scruples of the two lovers; and after many struggles, which have been related at length by Madame de

and render her devoted to his interests. But she who had refused to consent to sacrifice her mistress to the king himself, felt her cheek glow with indignation whilst listening to her priestly persecutor, and, scornfully rejecting the Cardinal's advances, disdained his friendship at a time when there was not another lady within the court circle who would not have devoutly offered up her orisons to have been so distinguished.

Now that we are able to grasp the entire range of the seventeenth century, from the flood of light cast upon it by innumerable memoirs as well as documentary annals, and trace almost step by step its regular march, from the glorious beginnings of Henry IV. down to the last sorrowful years of Louis XIV., it is easy for us both to comprehend and absolve Richelieu. We can conceive that to have done, at once and for ever, with the relics of feudal society; to place the royal power irrevocably above that of an aristocracy—numerically in excess, ill-regulated, and turbulent—to hinder the Protestants from forming a State within a State, and make them obedient to the common law; to arrest the house of Hapsburg, already mistress of one-half of Europe; to aggrandize the territories of France, and introduce some degree of order and unity amongst the new phase of society springing up therein, so full of life and vigour, but in which the most discordant elements struggled,—an extraordinary energy was needed, and perchance, for a season, an enlightened dictatorship, a despotism at once rational and intelligent. But which of us, amongst the firmest partisans of Richelieu, could have been sure of approving his policy, and of cherishing an unswerving admiration of it, being witnesses of so many blows remorselessly struck, so many cases of exile, such oft-occurring scaffolds? His contemporaries saw nothing less than all this. Let us imagine ourselves, therefore, placed in the position of a young and well-born girl, sprung from a feudal race, located at the court of the queen-mother, and transferred, when only fifteen years old, to that of Anne of Austria. The greater her nobility of character, the less was she likely to see clearly to the bottom of pass-

ing events Mademoiselle d'Hautefort understood neither the interests of France, the state of Europe, its history, nor its politics. With all her intellect, so much vaunted for its vivacity and delicacy, she was incapable of penetrating the veil either of the past or the future, and the present wounded her in all her instincts, whether of honour or benevolence. Graciously welcomed by the queen mother, Marie had ere long beheld her exiled, and learned that her first protectress, the wife of Henry the Great and the mother of Louis XIII., whose wrongs surpassed her comprehension, had been reduced to such dire poverty as to subsist in Belgium on the charity of strangers. The observant maid of honour had not known Anne of Austria in her early and somewhat volatile youth, but since 1610 she had seen nothing that could shock the most prudish severity. She found it quite natural that, forsaken and ill treated by her husband, the queen should ask aid of her brother the King of Spain, and that, oppressed by Richelieu, she should defend herself with any weapon that came to her hand. She witnessed the woes of her royal mistresses, and believed in her virtue. In 1633, Mademoiselle d'Hautefort saw the blow struck which dispersed the inner circle of the queen, when Madame de Chevreuse, whose intrepidity, if nothing else, elicited her admiration, was driven from court for the second time, and the Chevalier de Jars condemned to death, and only receiving pardon upon the scaffold. Whilst all these cruelties aroused indignation in Mademoiselle d'Hautefort's bosom, the courageous fidelity of the queen's friends served to strengthen her own. She braved, therefore, the prophetic menaces of Louis XIII., repelled the offers of Richelieu, who was nothing more in her eyes than a talented tyrant, and gave herself up wholly and solely to Queen Anne, firmly resolved to share her destiny even to the end.

Richelieu, failing to gain her over, next sought to ruin her in the king's estimation. He mixed himself up more than ever in their frequent misunderstandings, no longer to compose, but to envenom them. From playing the part of a benevolent mediator, he now enacted the character of

a severe judge; so that when Louis the Just, growing discontented with the young maid of honour, would threaten to complain to the Cardinal, she mocked him with all the buoyancy of youth and lofty pride of her nature. Richelieu then brought into play two devices of most cunning invention to bear upon the king's heart. Louis XIII. was at once mistrustful and devout. He had learned by gossiping report—full, as usual, of perfidious exaggeration—that within the queen's inner circle, Mademoiselle d'Hautefort was in the habit of jesting with her majesty upon his personal peculiarities, his moody temper, and his eccentric style of love-making. On the other hand, when, more and more smitten with the ever-increasing beauty of the charming damsel, whose graces grew with her years, he reproached himself for entertaining a sentiment too ardent to be always entirely pure, Richelieu, instead of appeasing, as before, his scruples of conscience, nourished them, and in the sequel ended by denouncing it as a sin to cherish in his royal bosom an immoderate attachment condemned by religion. Louis for a long while resisted this subtle logic; and to carry his point, the Cardinal was at length forced to give him the choice between his Eminence or Mademoiselle d'Hautefort, and to declare that he preferred rather retiring altogether than to continue to wear himself out in a struggle waged in the dark, throughout which the king's support had entirely failed him. This threat terrified Louis XIII., and Richelieu, perceiving that he was vacillating, to bring him at once to a decision, told him that it was not a question of banishing Mademoiselle d'Hautefort from court for ever, but only for a fortnight or so, in order that it might be seen that the favour she enjoyed was not so great as had been believed. The king yielded at last, but not without stipulating hard and fast upon the condition that the separation should only continue for a fortnight. The Cardinal assured him that he required nothing beyond that; but dreading the accustomed ascendancy of Mademoiselle d'Hautefort, he made the king promise not to see her again. Scarcely was the bargain struck, than Richelieu

hastened to carry it out. He sent a mandate, in the king's name, to the formidable Favourite, ordering her to withdraw from court for a while, and a command to the guards on duty, that they should not admit her to the king's apartments. The fortnight's exile having ended, however, and the imperious Cardinal's mandate not extending to the queen's apartments, the king and the maid of honour met again therein, but at length, towards 1635, at the termination of one of their bickerings, which chanced to prove rather brisker than usual, the sorrowful visaged king formed the resolution of breaking with a mistress so lovely, but so little complaisant, and for several days he no longer exchanged a word with her. Louis, however, loved her not the less, and of an evening, in the queen's inner circle, his melancholy but impassioned gaze scarcely withdrew itself from the attractive beauty. He sat contemplating her in silence, and when he perceived that it was observed, he averted his eyes in another direction. But the rupture once begun, the watchful Cardinal contrived to widen and prolong it for some two years.

The grief of Anne of Austria at the loss of such a friend may easily be imagined, of whose misfortune, too, she accused herself of being the cause. She wept, sobbed, and embraced her maid of honour many times, and not knowing sufficiently how to compassionate her trying position, or what to offer her, she took the diamond jewels from her ears, worth upwards of ten or twelve thousand crowns, and gave them to Marie, begging her to keep them as a token of their mutual affection.

The year 1637 proved the saddest and most trying period that it had yet been Anne's lot to pass through. Never before had Louis XIII. forsaken her to such an extent, and the deserted queen had only kept around her a very small number of friends and attendants, out of which she had formed for herself a slender yet familiar circle—scarcely to be called a court, but still into which the vigilant glance of the ubiquitous Cardinal frequently contrived to penetrate.

Wearied with her sufferings, Anne of Austria pondered upon some desperate enterprise which might set her free from her embarrassment; in which, at least, she intrigued with Madame de Chevreuse, then under banishment in Touraine, and carried on a more than equivocal correspondence with her two brothers, the Cardinal Infante and King Philip IV., during the time that Spain was at war with France. One of her domestics whom she employed in this correspondence, and who was in all her secrets, La Porte, was arrested, thrown into one of the dungeons of the Bastille, and subjected to a most terrible ordeal. After beginning by denying everything with the most astonishing assurance, the queen, pressed by Richelieu and by irrecusable indications, dreading the heaviest calamities, made certain grave avowals, which have come down to our times, and which, although of a character sufficiently weighty as they stand, could not have been complete; for if they had, the queen need merely have caused La Porte to be instructed by the Chancellor Seguier, and by a letter in her own handwriting, to declare all that he knew; whilst she, in fact, adopted a very different line of conduct. She considered her fate as suspended by a hair, and that it was absolutely necessary, according to the turn which the affair might take, that Madame de Chevreuse should either take flight or remain where she was. It was especially important, likewise, that La Porte, in his replies to the interrogatories, should not go beyond the avowals of the queen; and, also, that he should own all that she had confessed, in order to give to their common declarations a perfect semblance of truth. La Porte, intimidated, might reveal too much, or his persistence in denying everything might suggest a mystery: the queen dreaded alike his strength and his weakness. A secret understanding was therefore necessary; but the difficulty was how to obtain it; how to get at La Porte, buried in his cell in the depths of the Bastille; how forewarn even Madame de Chevreuse, ignorant of what was going on, and who might at any moment be arrested.

At this serious conjuncture, Marie d'Hautefort resolved

to save her royal mistress, or be lost with her. For her sake she had already sacrificed the king's favour, that of Richelieu, and her chance of worldly prosperity—she who had nothing beside her wit and beauty, and who naturally loved show and splendour. She did more on this occasion—she risked for her that which was a thousand times more precious than fortune or even life itself—she risked her reputation. She stifled that instinctive modesty and reserve which at once constituted her highest charm and glory; she who until then had turned a deaf ear to every flattering proposal, and who had not permitted herself to write, under any pretext whatever, one single line in the shape of a *billet-doux* to any man living—this glorious girl condemned herself to play a part the most repugnant to all her tastes and all her habits. As a first step, she persuaded a gentleman, one of her kinsmen, M. de Montalais, to go to Tours and apprise Madame de Chevreuse of the state of affairs; to desire her to remain quietly there; at the same time to take every precaution, and tell her that she should be warned whether to flee or stay by the receipt of a prayer-book bound either in red or in green, according to the part it might be necessary to take. Next, on her own side, she proceeded to disguise herself as a grisette, drub with paint her lovely countenance, shroud her fair locks in a large, close-fitting head-dress, and at peep of day, ere any one was stirring within the walls of the Louvre, she quitted it by stealth, took a hired vehicle, and was driven to the Bastile. She knew that its gloomy recesses held a prisoner who once already had risked his head in the queen's behalf, displayed even in chains an unflinching firmness, and had only quite recently descended from the scaffold to which he had been condemned—François de Rochecourt, then called the *Chevalier*, afterwards the *Commandeur de Jars*. He had just begun to breathe again after undergoing that terrible ordeal, and was allowed to enjoy a certain degree of liberty within the fortress, and to receive visitors. The noble minded maid of honour, judging of the *Chevalier* by herself, believed that she might prevail upon him to risk his head a second time.

To his gaoler she gave herself out to be the sister of his *valet de chambre*, who had just come to acquaint the Chevalier that her brother was at the point of death, and to speak with him about certain pressing matters. De Jars, who knew his servant to be in good health, was not at all disposed to put himself to the inconvenience of receiving such a visit, and the lofty Marie d'Hautefort was obliged to wait some considerable time in the quarters of the *corps de garde*, which was at the entrance-gate of the Bastile, exposed to the rude gaze and jests of all the soldiers, and who, from the peculiarity of her costume, took her for an equivocal sort of damsel. She bore it all in silence, holding her head-gear so close with both hands that neither eyes nor features might be seen. At length the Chevalier de Jars decided upon granting the interview. Not recognising her at first, he was on the point of treating her in a rather unceremonious manner; when, drawing him aside from the bystanders, and entering the courtyard with the gallant De Jars, the only reply she made to his overtures was to raise her hood and show him that adorable face which, once beheld, could never be forgotten. "Ah, mademoiselle! is it you?" exclaimed the Chevalier. She enjoined silence, and explained in a few brief sentences what the queen required of him. Their import had relation to the practicability of getting a sealed letter conveyed to La Porte, in which directions were given him as to how far he might and ought to go in his declarations. That letter she placed in the Chevalier's hands, saying, "This, sir, is what the queen bade me give you; you must use all your address and credit in this very place to insure such letter reaching the prisoner in safety with whose name it is superscribed. I ask much of you, but I have counted on your not abandoning me in the project I have formed of extricating the queen from the imminent peril in which she is involved." The Chevalier, brave though he was, saw with some astonishment that it was a question of running another risk of his life. He weighed it and pondered over it for some length of time. Mademoiselle d'Hautefort, perceiving him hesitate, exclaimed,

"What! do you deliberate, and you see what I hazard? for if I chance to be discovered, what will people say of me?" "*Eh bien*?" replied the Chevalier, "what the queen requests must be done—there is no help for it. I have only just managed to descend the steps of the scaffold, and I must now, I suppose, dance up them again. That's all."

Mademoiselle d'Hautesfort was equally fortunate in again escaping recognition on returning to the Louvre as on quitting it in the morning. She found also faithfully on the watch, in a dark corner near her own apartment, her maid, whom she had placed there as a sentinel before she started, lest the king passing near that way to mass, chancing to make some inquiries after her health, it should not fail being told him that, having found herself indisposed during the night, she was sleeping later than usual. But when she saw herself once more safe within the four walls of her own chamber, and reflected on the adventure she had just achieved, she felt terrified at the bare remembrance. The young and modest maiden was no longer the heroine, and she sank on her knees to offer fervent thanks to Heaven for having guided and protected her.

The Chevalier de Jars did wonders. His chamber was four stories above the dungeon wherein La Porte was confined. Boring a hole through his flooring, he let down the queen's letter by fastening it to a string, accompanying it with an entreaty to the prisoner occupying the second chamber to do the like with the important missive, and so on successively down to the lowest, in which lay La Porte, strongly enjoining the most profound secrecy. In such manner did the queen's letter reach the hands of the faithful *valet de chambre* intact. An astonishing thing, that so difficult and complicated a manœuvre, and which was carried on for several nights, should have been accomplished without any of the gaolers perceiving it, or any of those who took part in it compromising the whole by the slightest indiscretion! In such wise, that this prisoner, so jealously guarded in a *cachot* barricaded with doors of iron, received detailed instructions that put him in a position to be able to justify thoroughly

both himself and his royal mistress. The persistence exhibited by La Porte all along would have been turned against the queen, if in the end it had not been enlightened and guided by the letter which luckily reached him, thanks to the bold energy of the Chevalier de Jars, whose devotion was due to the example of Mademoiselle d'Hautefort.

So soon as the lovely Marie could reasonably cherish a hope of success, she had hastened to despatch to Madame de Chevreuse, as had been agreed upon, the prayer-book in the favourable-coloured cover, which was to impart confidence and keep her where she was. But, unfortunately, either Madame de Chevreuse mistook the signal colour of the cover, or Mademoiselle d'Hautefort herself did. However that might be, Madame de Chevreuse understood that all was going wrong; and as that which she most dreaded was to be thrown into prison, she made a hasty flight, disguised in male attire, and sought refuge in Spain, where the brother of Anne of Austria welcomed her almost as warmly as the Duke of Lorraine had received her formerly, on the occasion of her first banishment. This untoward event, happening shortly before the last interrogation of La Porte, revived and excited to the highest degree the irritation and suspicions of Richelieu. Redoubled severity was shown towards the queen; La Rochefoucauld, whom Madame de Chevreuse had seen for a moment while passing through Vertœil for the purpose of changing horses, was flung into prison for a short time, and none knew what turn things might take if La Porte, assuming the appearance of yielding to the *official* order in which the queen directed him to disclose everything, had not admirably confirmed the declaration of his mistress in the mode, concerted, and by that means persuaded the king and the Cardinal that the whole matter was of less importance than they had at first surmised.

It is needless to tell with what lively gratitude Anne of Austria was penetrated for De Jars, La Porte, and more than all, for her youthful and intrepid maid of honour, and what promises she made her should she ever again see better days. But Mademoiselle d'Hautefort had already received

her reward. She had felt her heart beat with that energy which makes the hero, she had forgotten self for the welfare of another, she had placed herself with the oppressed against the oppressor, she had been sympathizing, charitable, generous, —in a word, Christian, according to the idea she had formed for herself of the religion of the Crucified.

As soon as the pregnancy of the queen was announced, at the commencement of the year 1638, that thrice happy and important fact helped to obliterate the impression of the ill omened scenes that had so recently occurred, and brought back something like concord and amenity to the court of France. Mademoiselle d'Hautefort was then in her twenty-second summer. The last few years had wonderfully increased the lustre of her charms. Louis XIII, who had severed himself from their intimacy with so much reluctance, felt, on beholding her again, all his former affection revive, and Mademoiselle de la Fayette being no longer there to amuse him, he became more enamoured than ever of Mademoiselle d'Hautefort. This second amorous fit lasted some two years, and this, like the first, was troublous, though chaste.

We will not dwell upon, but merely confine ourselves to a bare mention of the fact that Mademoiselle d'Hautefort did not take advantage to turn to profit, on the score of worldly interests, the return of a tender feeling on the king's part. The sole favour which she consented to receive, and that as much from the queen's hand as the king's, was the reversion of the post of lady of the bedchamber, held by her aunt, Madame de la Motte Hauteville. From the time of her being invested with that appointment, she had the right to be entitled *Madame*, and so we shall hereafter call her.

The renewal of favour which Madame d'Hautefort next enjoyed for two years must have contributed to render her final disgrace only the more grievous. As we have said, Richelieu covertly and insidiously discredited her in the monarch's opinion, whose self love she wounded instead of flattering his foibles. When the Cardinal judged the moment opportune, therefore, he accomplished the ruin of the fair

and dangerous favourite by superseding her by one of the other sex. For some time past the Grand Equerry Cinq Mars had gradually taken, thanks to Richelieu's protection, the place which De Luynes in the first instance, and later Saint-Simon, had occupied in the king's affections. In 1640 Louis made a journey to Mezières, unaccompanied by the queen, and consequently without Madame d'Hautefort. The occasion was propitious for the Grand Equerry; he secured to himself the confidence of his royal master, and the latter assured him that henceforward his heart would be wholly his, without any share of it being given to another. He kept his word. As soon as he returned to Paris he manifested great coldness towards Madame d'Hautefort; and visiting the Chateau of St. Germain shortly afterwards, he thence despatched to his first love, without any explanation whatever, an order to quit the court. Stupefied at its receipt, Madame d'Hautefort wrote to the king that she would not believe that such a command had issued from his hand until she had heard it from his lips. The only answer to this was a *lettre de cachet*, which at first she looked upon as a jest. However, finding that all her endeavours to obtain an audience of the king were fruitless, she resolved to operate upon Louis by a surprise. With hood drawn down so as completely to hide her features, she stationed herself in the guard-chamber, through which the king had to pass in going to chapel to hear mass, and there awaited his coming. On his appearance, she approached him, raised her hood, and told him that she had been unable to credit the order of exile, after all the protestations of tenderness he had made her. Louis, taken by surprise at such an apparition and such an interpellation, remained for an instant dumbfounded; but, making an effort to overcome his embarrassment, he replied, "True, true," and passed on quickly. Such was the somewhat rude and very abrupt *dénouement* of that Platonic amour—of rarer occurrence in court life than in any other sphere of society, and so little understood in the following reign, that the Dauphin, son of Louis XIV., seeing at court, at the beginning of 1674, the Duchess de Schomberg, asked

in a whisper of somebody who told him that his grandfather had been in love with her when she was known as Mademoiselle d'Hautefort, "How many children did he have by her?" Madame de Sevigné, who relates this little anecdote in one of those inimitable letters to her daughter, piquantly adds that "*l'on instruisit le Dauphin du modes de ce temps-là.*"

After this signal di-grace, Madame d'Hautefort retired to the seclusion of an estate she possessed near Mans, and there she remained until 1613. Louis XIII. having expired on the 14th of May of that same year, and being preceded to the tomb by Richelieu on the 2nd of the previous December, 1612, Anne of Austria, become Regent, recalled from exile her former lady of the bedchamber, and was even gracious enough to despatch her own royal litter and guard to conduct her to Paris. The queen wrote also to her with her own hand in these affectionate terms: "*Venez, chère amie; je meurs d'entie de vous embrasser.*"

Madame d'Hautefort accordingly hastened to present herself to her dearly beloved mistress, the new Regent; and "letter in hand," says Madame de Motteville, "she ran quickly up to the queen's apartments, and was received by her far more coldly than could have been expected after the warm eagerness shown in inviting her back to court, and the caressing kind of note she had written her." The familiarity of former days, it was evident, had ceased for ever. Several trifling privileges—among others that of the *entrée* to the queen's praying-closet, to which Madame d'Hautefort attached much value—were not restored to her. This diminution of favour—explicable, perhaps, by the long absence of Madame d'Hautefort, which had delivered up Anne to other confidants, several of whom were secretly hostile to the favourite, and also by her position as Regent, which gave to the queen "a majesty more imposing than that of the discredited wife of a king with no authority,"—this diminution of favour, we repeat, prompted La Porte, one of the queen's most zealous servants, to hazard the remark that Madame

d'Hautefort had now realized the truth contained in the words of the Psalmist—"Put not your trust in princes."

Doubtless, on that occasion Madame d'Hautefort remembered the prediction uttered by Louis, her lover, in one of those paroxysms of ill-humour by which he punished his fair friend for her preference of Anne, his consort—"You love an ingrate, and you will see some day how she will repay your services." Of the most important among those services Louis XIII. remained ignorant to his dying hour. Madame de Motteville, speaking of that great and perilous service rendered the queen by Madame d'Hautefort, adds, "It prevailed over her, perhaps, in the sequel, and induced her to contradict and criticise the queen in everything." Certainly the conduct of that princess afforded, on one head especially—that of her predilection for Mazarin—a handle for satire; and public report, as well as some of her familiar friends, did not spare her in the matter. But Madame d'Hautefort should have (just because she knew that the queen felt herself to lie under the weight of an obligation) placed more bounds to her blame. Her devotion, ever increasing, rendered her more and more severe; and though she was serviceable, humane, and disinterested, as she was stiff (according to Madame de Motteville), and even somewhat rude (according to Montglat), she ended by wearying the Regent. One summer's evening, the heat being excessive, the queen, having remained without lights in her great cabinet, with Beringhen and Mademoiselle Beaumont, complained to them of Madame d'Hautefort. The latter, having overheard her from the little cabinet adjoining, entered abruptly, began to weep, got into a great state of excitement, and assured the queen that, in order to make things pleasant, she would no longer show herself hostile to Mazarin. This scene ended in a reconciliation; but Madame d'Hautefort in no wise modified her line of action. The misunderstanding between her and Anne of Austria reached such a height that the Regent only waited for an occasion to detach herself entirely from her, and give her her *congé*. On another evening, in 1644, whilst the

words just quoted adds that Anne of Austria said nothing, but merely raised her eyes towards heaven.

We have all our several weaknesses and imperfections; none, perhaps, among us are angels in disguise. Let us add, therefore, to the above censure the more agreeable portraiture a contemporary has left us of the personal and mental attributes of the fair maid of honour and lady of the bedchamber of Anne of Austria:—"Madame d'Hautefort is tall and of a very fine shape; her brow broad in its contour, which advances very slightly beyond the line of the eyes, whose depths are blue, the corners well cut, their orbs of sparkling brightness, with modest but surpassingly vivacious expression; she has fair eyebrows, sufficiently well pencilled, arching from each other at the point of junction of the forehead; her nose is aquiline; her mouth neither too large nor too compressed, but well formed; the lips lovely, and of a fine and vivid carnation; the teeth white and regular. Two little dimples on either side of the mouth achieve its perfection and heighten the witchery of her smile. The chin does not descend so low as to rob the face of its oval outline, but separating itself into two parts, thereby discloses a small hollow, which again forms another matchless charm. In her well-rounded cheeks it would seem as though nature loved to mingle its tints of rose and lily so daintily, that the one appears contending perpetually with the other. She has the finest *blond cendré* coloured hair conceivable, in large masses and very long, the temples being well covered. Her bosom is well formed, sufficiently developed, and very white, the neck columnar and gracefully turned; her arms round and symmetrical, with a plump hand and slender fingers. Her demeanour is free and unstudied; and though she does not give herself certain affected airs which the majority of fine ladies assume, to render, as they think, their beauty more attractive, she does not the less possess an indefinable something pervading her entire person, that at once impresses the gazer with mingled feelings of respect and friendship.

"Such is, as nearly as may be, a description of the personal appearance of Madame d'Hautefort. There remains

something to be added on the score of her mental attributes. With these she is amply endowed. She expresses herself with simplicity and precision, manifesting more common sense than imagination, and gives an agreeable turn to anything she talks upon; exhibiting at the same time a playfulness allied with so much modesty, that those who hear her take pleasure in listening. She is naturally prone to raillery, and understands the keenest banter; but as she is very pious, she knows so well how to regulate her wit as never to offend any one.

“This very lovely woman possesses the heart of a queen and the courage of a heroine; and it is so full of goodness, that one may say with truth that no unfortunate person ever quitted her without being consoled both by her advice and bounty. She has, indeed, a large and generous soul, is free-handed and full of charity, having ever been of opinion that her wealth and influence were given only for the alleviation of the miseries of her neighbour, of whatsoever rank in life. On first hearing of a tale of woe or need, she thought only about the means of bestowing her gifts in a manner that should not take the form of an alms, to avoid wounding the feelings of the recipient. How many liberal pensions has she not granted to girls and women of quality, to prevent their necessities from compelling them to accept succour from others, through following evil courses! In every state and position in which she has been placed throughout life—whether at court, as the Favourite both of the monarch and of the queen her mistress, or married and a duchess—her abode has ever been open to those who derived their subsistence from her hands, or needed in some other way her succour.

“She was, notwithstanding, born with an extraordinary degree of pride and ambition; but happily a sense and love of what constitutes true glory and virtue led her to sacrifice everything to her reputation. Therefore did she enjoy a happiness but rarely experienced by persons who have, like herself, passed their lives in courts; so that no one has ever said or written a word in disparagement of her; but,

on the contrary, everybody has always been loud in her praise."

This virtuous Favourite of royalty passed the latter years of her life in a mansion she caused to be erected for her near the convent of the Madeleine; and there she expired at the age of seventy-five, after bearing with exemplary patience to its termination a long and painful malady.

